

DECEMBER 2018

AUSTRALIA

# PLAYBOY



*CJ*  
**SPARXX**

*Khloe*  
**TERAE**

*Maisa*  
**KEIL**

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**INTERNATIONAL GODDESSES**

**THE ART OF DRINKING**  
THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN MIXOLOGY CANDIDATE

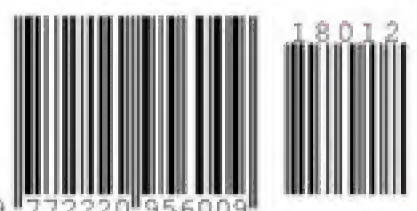
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## PLAYBILL



### Ellen von Unwerth

Provocative images of strong women are a hallmark of von Unwerth's work. Pairing the inimitable photographer, whose last PLAYBOY shoot was Pamela Anderson's 2016 pictorial, with ERA advocate and Free the Nipple founder Lina Esco (The Dawn of a New ERA) is the perfect marriage of artist and subject.



### Maxim Loskutoff

In May, The National Book Review praised Loskutoff and his debut collection of short stories, *Come West and See*, calling him "a blazing new and original talent." The *Fourth Armada*, a work of historical fiction that explores the brutality of the early 16th century, is the Montana native and former carpenter's first story for PLAYBOY.



### Stephen Voss

Few capture the essence of Washington, D.C.'s power players like photographer Voss, who provides the Tucker Carlson portraits for this issue's PLAYBOY Interview. Although his accolades are many, Voss considers making Mikhail Gorbachev laugh during a photo session to be among his greatest accomplishments.



### Luis Gomez

An internationally renowned photographer, producer, editor, videographer and musician, whose work is published worldwide, Luis Gomez is known as a guitar player and exclusive artist signed by Gibson guitars and producer and filmmaker. Luis Gomez is the CEO of Universe 137 Studios And Chicas Universe 137 working with more than 40 magazines.





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No 12 December 2018



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# PLAYBOY.CLUB EXCLUSIVES

Unlock new NSFW galleries, enjoy unfettered journalism and revisit our archives

▶▶  
GALLERIES



*Shauna Sexton*

Vet tech turned May 2018 Playmate Shauna Sexton headlines a new gallery, this time shot by Melissa Cartagena, whose Docile Project celebrates women's sensuality "as a source of inspiration...to live freely and without taboos."

▶▶  
PROFILES



*Dave Rubin*

Following Rubin's monthlong break from social media, PLAYBOY profiles the "classical liberal" host of *The Rubin Report*, a streaming talk show that has become a safe haven for members of the controversial Intellectual Dark Web.

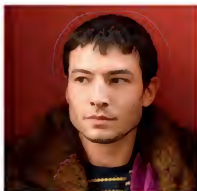
▶▶  
HERITAGE

## *Telling Tails*

To toast Playboy Club New York's opening, we're spotlighting the women who over the decades turned the Bunny suit into a cherished piece of Americana. Features include never-before-seen photos of 1960s Bunnies as well as interviews with the New York club's seamstress and Head Bunnies.



▶▶  
CELEBRITIES



*Ezra Miller*

With *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* out in November, the actor — who's also DC's big-screen Flash — opens up about holding down two major franchises while maintaining his identity and impressive style.

▶▶  
CULTURE

## *The Smoking Nun*

In *Sisters of the Valley*, PLAYBOY editor Ariela Kozin lights up with a collective of "feminist nuns" who are growing weed and producing CBD products in Merced, California. "Our only religion is cannabis," says founder Sister Kate, "and we fashion ourselves after our Beguine mothers."







LET'S PLAY

# TOMMY GENESIS

For Tommy Genesis, this moment has been a long time coming — and if that were a Tommy Genesis lyric, it would definitely be a double entendre. The rapper dropped her first mixtape, *World Vision*, in 2015 and has since released one audacious music video after another, including the self-directed “Tommy,” featuring plenty of nude writhing in a bathtub. Her gutsy style and unabashedly sexualised tracks have garnered her a devoted fan base. “I once thought, Wouldn’t it be awesome if everybody could listen to the song, whatever your age? But then I didn’t feel like I was being true to how I write,” the half-Swedish, half-Tamil musician says. “If I’m saying, ‘You gon’ like the pussy, but I ain’t no pussy’ — yeah, that’s about me. That is how I feel.” She even used her music’s raw soul-searching as a way to come out as bisexual. (“I never thought it was shocking.”) Having toured with Dua Lipa earlier this year, she’s finally dropping her self-titled debut this fall; her fiery single “100 Bad” has already popped up on HBO’s *Insecure*. “I’m in this in-between phase between who I was and who I am,” she says. “Nothing feels like anything until my album comes out.” —*Ryan Gajewski*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
RICK RODNEY



# WORLD of PLAYBOY

## Mad for Moschino

"I follow my inspiration to wherever it goes," Jeremy Scott once said. This fall, the Moschino creative director no doubt found plenty to follow at our Rabbit's newest den. On September 6, Scott christened the not-yet-opened Playboy Club New York with an exclusive afterparty following the New York Fashion Week debut of his spring/summer 2019 collection, Meta Muse. Party highlights included Cardi B (left) singing along to her hit "Bodak Yellow" as Stella Maxwell, Quavo, Kim Petras and others danced along.



1. Tiffany Haddish leans in. 2. Scott with actress Dove Cameron. 3. Paris Jackson, joined by Miles Richie, strikes a pose in Moschino. 4. Migos member Quavo smolders. 5. Cardi B and A\$AP Rocky with the man of the hour.





## Midsummer Night's Dream Scenes

Back in July, our annual summer bacchanal celebrated its third year as the season's sexiest party in Sin City. MSND 2018 was hosted by Halsey, who hit the red carpet in a custom-made sartorial shout-out to the iconic Bunny suit. The Grammy nominee, a fixture on Playboy's pages and stages since her December 2015 debut in the magazine, brought the sleepwear-saturated crowd of 4,000 to its feet with such hits as "Closer" and "Bad at Love." Other VIPs gracing the Marquee Nightclub at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas included 10 Playmates (pictured below with Cooper Hefner) and hip-hop artist French Montana. We danced all night and into the morning light with an endless stream of bangers from DJ Eric DLux.



## A Sensually Spooky Soiree

Nobody throws a costume party like the Rabbit. Following our annual summer residency at TAO Beach, we return to Las Vegas for Playboy Presents Dia de los Muertos, a happily haunted celebration going down November 1 at TAO Nightclub. Guests and Playmates will enjoy a night of drinks, dancing and no shortage of Day of the Dead decor. (August 2018 Playmate Lorena Medina, above, shows how it's done.) For more information, visit [playboy.com](http://playboy.com).

## Playboy ♥ NY

On September 12, the Playboy Club New York opened its doors in Manhattan — for the first time in three decades. At the center of the jam-packed event: our beloved Bunnies, including December Playmate Jordan Emanuel (pictured below, on left). For reservations, visit [playboyclubnyc.com](http://playboyclubnyc.com).





# The Art of Drinking

Mixology may be an art, but there are no starving artists in the spirits world — only advertisers. **Billy Lyons** talks to America's top label makers about what goes into selling you a drink

While history has seen tremendous changes in the way we consume alcohol — merlot and Moscow mules are now sold in cans — the connection we have with a spirit still likely begins with the bottle. Case in point: Moët & Chandon has barely updated the Dom Pérignon label since it became part of the company's portfolio, perhaps because many people believe that French monk Pierre Pérignon designed the label himself for his namesake cuvée in the 17th century and that it constitutes the first known

handwritten wine label. As false as that claim may be, a 1930s ad for the champagne's 1929 vintage showcases a label nearly identical to the 2009 vintage's. That's because many casual drinkers still make their booze purchases based on the aesthetics — whether familiar, rare or peculiar—of the bottles. That's all the more true during the season of giving, when the realization that you're heading to a holiday party giftless lands you in the fluorescent maze of your local beverage depot.

Today in the United States, drinkers are consuming more alcohol than ever before, and the industry will pull in almost \$160 billion in revenue by New Year's Eve, according to Statista. While it's impossible to nail down the exact number of distilleries, wineries and spirits producers operating around the world, the largest distributor, Diageo, estimates shipping more than 200 million units this year. In other words, myriad options line your corner store, and spirits companies know



they must work diligently to impress you from a crowded shelf.

Enter the artists, designers and marketers, such as Julia Childress, who are responsible for turning your passing glance into a long-term relationship that results in cash sales. Childress is the chief marketing officer and a graphic designer for Schilling Cider, and she has the unique advantage of seeing how her designs directly impact the company's sales. "Our branding is close to 50 percent of our overall marketing strategy," she says. "The reason we have loyal customers is because of the liquid inside, but our 'look' is our biggest selling point."

Citing Nielsen market research, Forbes reported in-store hard-cider sales grew by seven percent in 2018's first quarter. But as Childress notes, when craft cider first hit shelves at mainstream retailers en masse around 2012, brands played it safe with clean, literal designs, riding the coattails of the leading craft beers. Apples, trees and other natural imagery — think Angry Orchard's and Stella Artois Cider's packaging — were common themes. By contrast, Schilling Hard Cider cans feature a pink flamingo and a bearded lumberjack smoking a pipe, among other kitschy graphics. Designs are also nostalgic; Childress's fondness for the Toys "R" Us mascot, Geoffrey the Giraffe, for example, inspired the use of a giraffe in outer space on the Schilling Hard Cider Excelsior can. "A good design is a combination of art and psychology," says Childress. "It should be aesthetically pleasing while also evoking the emotions and thoughts intended by its creator."

While Childress notes it would be easier to incorporate controversial images, it wouldn't align with the brand's story, and having a story behind the visual is what keeps consumers coming back for more. "The design always comes from the story of the product," says Azar Kazimir, creative director of Berlin-based Michelberger Boozee, whose psychedelic paintings are inspired by the flavor notes of the herbal liqueur bottles they adorn. "When we look at Michelberger Forest and Mountain, the nature of the drinks is reflected in the bottle design. They live in the world of old German fairy tales, so one bottle is set in a forest and the other in the mountains."

Landing on an image that is both eye-catching and heartfelt is no easy feat. "We pay close attention to trends," Childress explains. "When we're creating a new label, I make three to five mock-ups that we argue about in the office and in focus groups. We

fine-tune those, then publish the variations via social media and ask for feedback."

But brands that closely track trends can easily stumble into gimmicks. In 2011, for example, at the height of the 3-D film craze, the Kraken, a black spiced rum, released a limited-edition label that was, yes, 3-D.

The Kraken's current label is the work of London-based Stranger & Stranger, one of many full-service agencies that grow their businesses not just on their ability to deliver clients new labels but on providing research that proves the labels will attract new customers. Stranger & Stranger — whose clients include Martini & Rossi bitters, Hangar

1 vodka, Woolf/Sung whiskeys and even Bertolli olive oil — offers services that range from organising focus groups to building business plans. And the outfit is small, with fewer than 50 employees. "The Kraken was a great client because they had insight into a tired old brand and gave us a one-line brief: 'Take a bite out of Captain Morgan,'" founder Kevin Shaw recalls. Indeed, the image of a wide-eyed mythical sea monster extending its tentacles around a Victorian-era glass jug is the antithesis of a gloating cartoon pirate.

Perhaps no beverage brand's label has personified a lifestyle better than Sailor Jerry's, created by the world-famous tattoo artist Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins. Although he passed away in 1973, his legacy is preserved through the bottles of spiced rum that bear his moniker and designs. The iconic brand, though recently updated, has always focused on Collins's home base of Oahu, with a hula girl strumming a ukulele and Sailor Jerry's own signature perfectly printed across the label. With palm trees, the ocean and a Hawaiian island in the background, the label illustrates how alcohol can transport you far away from your current state of mind.

Steven Grasse, founder and chief executive officer of Philadelphia-based Quaker City Mercantile, is the man chiefly responsible for updating the decades-old rum into a modern lifestyle brand. "Our design philosophy is simple: We want our brands to look as though they've been around for years. With the designs, we're careful not to modify Norman Collins's artwork, because that's what makes the brand authentic. We might design elements around it — for example, in April we placed the signature in a black medallion — but the hula girl artwork is exactly as Norman drew it." Grasse also notes that thanks to his 20-year relationship with the Sailor Jerry brand, he's so familiar with the designs that he and his team are able to call them from memory. "Sometimes we know exactly what we're looking for," he says, "and sometimes we go through the archives and find inspiration there."

Sailor Jerry's legacy proves that no matter the visual tactics employed, heartfelt design is just one step in a brand's strategy of ingratiating itself with consumers. "I do think customers will buy based on label design alone," Kazimir admits. "But if there's nothing behind the design, no great product or authentic story, they'll buy once and forget you. Design just gets your foot in the door. If you want your customers to keep coming back, you'd better have a great drink."



Opposite and above: Stranger & Stranger's design for Woolf/Sung's 1972 single-malt whiskey "The Hunter" is inspired by men's "hunt" for the perfect cask.



From left: Schilling Hard Cider Grapefruit and Chili; Michelberger's herbal liqueurs, inspired by German folk tales.





# Brooke BARNES

*Photographs by* **RYAN DWYER** *Produced by* **MAINSTREET PRODUCTIONS**  
*MUA* **BRIDGET MARTINEZ**















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**Tell us something surprising about you?**

My obsession with art and collecting art from around the world has become a big part of my life.

**Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?**

The first big modeling job I got was for American Playboy. I remember the first time I found a Playboy hidden in my grandfather's den. The women were so beautiful. I dreamt of being in Playboy until one day it happened! It's so exciting to now shoot for Playboy Australia!

**What inspires you?**

Art, live music, and traveling inspire me to open my mind and heart to more than I ever could have imagined. I've now become an artist myself and I love it.

**Why did you choose to pursue a career in modeling?**

I've always loved fashion, and beauty, especially the female physique. Celebrating all of that through modeling is what made me so into pursuing a career in modeling.

**Who do you look up to in the modeling industry?**

The model I look up to in the modeling industry is definitely Olivia Paladin. She's a sexy badass! Riding motorcycles, jumping out of planes, and more, all while being feminine and one of the hottest models.

**What are some of your hobbies?**

My hobbies include playing poker, collecting art from around the world, and going out with my girlfriends to live music shows!

**Name three things on your bucket list?**

My bucket list includes writing a book about my wild life and adventures, starting a charity, and collecting at least one piece of art from every country in the world.

**Turn-ons**

My turn-ons are Whiskey, midnight sex, great music.

**Turn-offs**

My turn offs are rude people, guys in sandals, and bad taste in music. ha!

**Describe to us your perfect date**

My perfect date would be dinner on the beach in Tahiti, stiff cocktails, a beautiful sunset, with sex under the stars for dessert. Mmmm

**Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?**

I'm Irish and Norwegian so first stop to a capitol of the world would definitely be Dublin, Ireland!

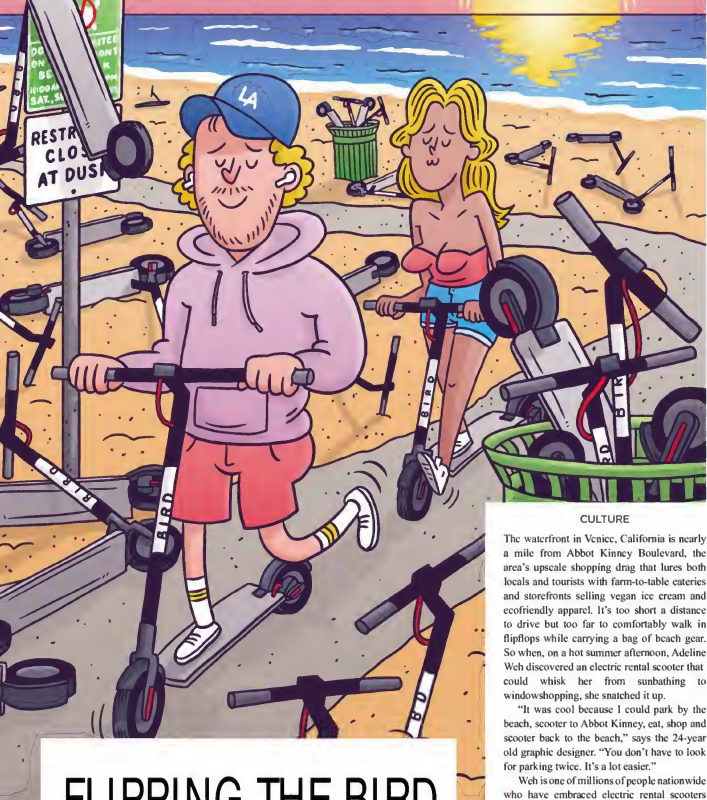
**What is your mantra?**

My mantra is to wake up with a fair eye and an open heart everyday! One love!









#### CULTURE

The waterfront in Venice, California is nearly a mile from Abbot Kinney Boulevard, the area's upscale shopping drag that lures both locals and tourists with farm-to-table eateries and storefronts selling vegan ice cream and ecofriendly apparel. It's too short a distance to drive but too far to comfortably walk in flipflops while carrying a bag of beach gear. So when, on a hot summer afternoon, Adeline Weh discovered an electric rental scooter that could whisk her from sunbathing to windowshopping, she snatched it up.

"It was cool because I could park by the beach, scooter to Abbot Kinney, eat, shop and scooter back to the beach," says the 24-year-old graphic designer. "You don't have to look for parking twice. It's a lot easier."

Weh is one of millions of people nationwide who have embraced electric rental scooters over the past year. After appearing seemingly overnight on city sidewalks throughout the country in late 2017 and early 2018, the devices are now available in dozens of municipalities in the U.S. and abroad. Deployed by a handful of start-up tech companies, the e-scooters rent

## FLIPPING THE BIRD

How e-scooters devolved from popular to problematic — and how they might find their way back

BY JESSICA P. OGLIVIE

ILLUSTRATION BY LUKE MCGARRY





for an average of \$1 to start the vehicle and an additional 15 cents per minute.

But in the short time they've been on the road, rental scooters, which are dockless (meaning they can be picked up and dropped off anywhere users want) and controlled by smartphone apps, have become lightning rods of controversy. Those who love them swear by their efficiency; those who hate them argue they're neighbourhood nuisances. Meanwhile, city officials, many of them blindsided by the sudden invasion, are rushing to enact regulations as it becomes apparent that scooters, following the success of Uber and Lyft, will continue to disrupt the industry of short-distance urban transportation.

Dockless electric rental scooters first showed up in the U.S. in September 2017, when Bird Rides, Inc. dropped a fleet of the devices onto the sidewalks of Santa Monica, California. They were an instant hit — not surprising in a city that ranks as one of the most bike-friendly in the country. By February of this year, more than 40,000 people had used an e-scooter there, according to a report in *The Washington Post*. Other companies, including Lime-Bike, Spin, Jump and Skip, have since released fleets of their own. Some of these companies' founders were inspired by the dockless transportation systems in China that launched several years ago.

"China had the first inexpensive pedal bikes parked around the city that anyone can use, with the twist of being stationless," says Ewlyn Poon, president of Spin, a San Francisco-based company that has scooter fleets in 19 American cities as of this writing.

Most companies claim their mission is altruistic: E-scooters reduce dependence on cars in already crowded cities, thereby decreasing pollution, traffic and car accidents. They also solve the so-called "first mile—last mile" problem, whereby commuters struggle to find a convenient way to cover the short distance to and from public transportation.

They're also a potential gold mine. In June, Bird raised \$300 million, led by Sequoia Capital, the same venture-capital firm that has backed 23andMe, Airbnb and Clutter. That financing gives Bird a valuation of \$2 billion and solidifies the e-scooter ecosystem as one of the hottest tech investments of next year.

"There's a kind of perfect storm," says Poon. "You have a product that has a clear market fit. It has great distribution. They naturally cause an immediate buzz, and they solve a big problem. It's an exciting space to be in."

As excited as early adopters may be, many city officials and residents have been far

less so. Few scooter companies coordinated with, or even informed, city officials before unleashing their fleets, opting for an "act now, ask forgiveness later" approach. That's partly because most cities don't have ordinances on the books regulating such devices. Scooters can technically be left in the middle of sidewalks, in front of residences and on wheelchair ramps without legal repercussions. Users frequently ride without protective gear and pay no attention to where they're going, resulting in dozens of scooter-related injuries — including at least one fatality, in Dallas this past September.

It's these lapses, and the perceived arrogance of scooter executives, that have given rise to a national online NIMBY movement. Anti-scooter Instagram posts have popped up in droves. Accounts such as @bird graveyard collect posts of individuals smashing, burning, submerging, tossing or otherwise vandalising e-scooters. The account @scootersbehavingbadly documents rider misconduct, including "people riding recklessly, egregious parking jobs, accidents and various forms of protests against scooters," according to the account's administrator, who asked to remain anonymous.

At first, many officials moved to ban the devices, at least in the short term. In February, Los Angeles City Council member Mitchell Englander proposed a moratorium after a fleet of dockless vehicles placed at California State University in Northridge almost immediately started bleeding into neighbouring areas.

"They were supposed to stay on campus, but there was no enforcement plan," he says. As a result, "they were wreaking havoc in the local community. Users were leaving them on private property, on people's lawns, blocking sidewalks, clogging streets. They were dropped in front of businesses' doorways and blocking entrances. My phone started ringing overnight." Santa Monica, Newport Beach and San Francisco have similarly banned e-scooters in the past year, albeit temporarily, so city officials could strategise and come up with an official response.

Englander's proposed legislation would have stopped distribution of the devices until a pilot program could be tested. "I love the idea of disruptive technology and the first mile—last mile connectivity that is missing here in Los Angeles," says

Englander. "And I love the idea of having new technology and transport systems employed — but within parameters and in a controlled environment."

Among the first companies to test parameters in advance of releasing their e-scooters is Spin. After working with officials in Coral Gables, Florida beginning in April 2018, the company now has an exclusive contract with the city. Coral Gables City Commissioner Vince Lago cites the collaboration as the reason the rollout has gone so smoothly.

"I decided to work with Spin so we could do it legally, without the typical rogue rollout," he says. "We haven't had one issue. They have been a hit."

## "WE CANNOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO OUR CITIES HERE IN THE U.S."

Since then, cities including Austin, Louisville and Baltimore, all of which initially prohibited scooter-rental companies from operating in their jurisdictions following random rollouts, have begun working with companies to allow them back on the streets, this time with regulations in place. Most limit the number of scooters each company can put on the street and the speed at which they can travel, and require that companies be responsible for picking them up.

In turn, a number of companies that executed surprise rollouts are backtracking. Earlier this year, Bird was nearly banned by the city of Santa Monica when officials voted to allow only a few such companies to operate within city limits. Bird CEO Travis VanderZanden released a public pledge on the company's website that states "we have all seen the results of out-of-control deployment in China.... We cannot let this happen to our cities here in the U.S." Bird promises not to increase its fleet unless the scooters are used an average of at least three times a day, to enforce pickup every night and to donate \$1 per vehicle per day to the city government.

Perhaps those rules will keep e-scooters on the streets and move us a little closer to the low-emission utopia their owners envision. For users like Weh, it's a future they would welcome. "I want to see them at every beach, near every beach. It really helps," she says. "I hope they stay around." ■



## PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

# TUCKER CARLSON

*A candid conversation with Fox News's prime-time provocateur on his "moderate" views, media manipulation, Rachel Maddow, mortality and why identity politics annoy him so damn much*

It's been almost a decade since Tucker Carlson stood in front of a crowd of conservatives and told them they should be doing a better job of telling the truth. It was February 2009, and Carlson, fresh from his canceled MSNBC debate show, Tucker, took the stage at the Conservative Political Action Conference and delivered a speech that stunned many in attendance. "If you create a news organization whose primary objective is not to deliver accurate news, you will fail," he said. He pointed to The New York Times as a competitor they should be emulating. "It's a paper that actually cares about accuracy," he said. "Conservatives need to build institutions that mirror those institutions." The audience booed him.

It was Carlson's equivalent of Bob Dylan going electric at Newport. He dared to be unpopular with his own crowd, explaining that they, and by extension he, could do better. In

that moment, it looked as if he was reinventing himself as a conservative champion of facts over punditry.

Whether he has fulfilled that promise depends on whom you ask. Less than a year after his infamous speech, he co-founded the conservative website The Daily Caller and was hired by Fox News, first as a contributor and eventually, in late 2016, as host of his own primetime show, Tucker Carlson Tonight, which has since become one of the network's ratings juggernauts. Next to Sean Hannity, Carlson is the face of Fox News and the target — and instigator — of seemingly endless controversy.

Over the past year alone, Carlson has managed to say so many divisive and antagonistic things it has been difficult to keep up. He has challenged diversity ("How, precisely, is diversity our strength?"), accused

Nike of trying to "destroy our society" with its Colin Kaepernick ads and questioned the need for feminism ("The patriarchy is gone. Women are winning. Men are failing"). He frequently says things that are downright jaw-dropping in their comical audacity. "I actually hate litter," he said in August, "which is one of the reasons I'm so against illegal immigration." In his worldview, colleges are "literally destroying the country." Mexico is a nation "controlled by the conquistadors," hate speech is a "made-up category designed to gut the First Amendment" and terrorism is a "largely immigrant phenomenon."

The anti-Carlson vitriol comes from both sides. He has been called "racist" by The Washington Post, "hate-filled" by Esquire (a former employer of his) and a perpetrator of "fringe shit" by Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane.



*"What's our job? Our job is to decide what's important and why. Fox has never, in the two years I've had the show, said, 'You can't do that.' I have pure editorial control."*



*"I don't think I'm an especially good person, but that's not what this is about. Aren't we supposed to be having a rational conversation about the best next move for the country?"*



*"I don't want to get into it because it sounds disingenuous, but I'm 49 years old and I don't think I've ever met a white supremacist. I've never met anyone who's like, 'I want a white ethno-state.'"*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN VOSS



On the right, he has sparked outrage from former Fox News host Bob Beckel, who this summer tweeted, "What the f\*ck has happened to you?" at Carlson. The network's former military analyst and retired Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters has compared Carlson to a prostitute, and *Weekly Standard* co-founder Bill Kristol, who once called Carlson a "great young reporter," asserted that his show represents a viewpoint "close now to racism."

There was a time when becoming a great reporter was Carlson's only aspiration. The son of Richard Carlson, an investigative journalist (among other jobs, including U.S. ambassador to the Seychelles), Tucker grew up in an affluent neighborhood in San Diego with a younger brother, Buckley. Their biological mother left when Tucker was just six, and his father remarried a few years later, to an heiress of the Swanson frozenfood empire.

Carlson tied the knot with his high school sweetheart and went on to become an acclaimed political writer in the 1990s, notably penning a 1999 *Talk* magazine profile of George W. Bush in which he describes the future president making jokes about a death-row inmate pleading for her life. (Bush denied Carlson's account.) He dabbled in TV, making appearances on cable news but insisting he never took it seriously as a medium. He held off until 2000, when CNN hired him to co-host *The Spin Room* and then *Crossfire*, the latter program causing *The Daily Show* host Jon Stewart to accuse Carlson of "hurting America" in a standoff that now holds a place in the annals of television.

The late columnist Christopher Hitchens, an early admirer of Carlson's writing, said in a 2007 interview, "I do remember telling Tucker I wish he wouldn't give up writing for TV. And I hope he sometimes hears the distant, hollow echo of my voice. Tucker, don't doooo t hat." Perhaps finally hearing Hitchens's voice, Carlson has returned to writing with his new book, *Ship of Fools: How a Selfish Ruling Class Is Bringing America to the Brink of Revolution*, which takes on economic inequality, environmentalists, Facebook, the Clintons, feminists, First Amendment deniers and, of course, elites.

We sent Contributing Editor Eric Spitznagel, who last interviewed Michael Shannon for us, to meet with Carlson in Washington, D.C. He reports: "Conversing

with Tucker is a weird dance. I kept wondering if I should be challenging him more. But what good would come of that? Carlson's entire job is defending his ideas, mostly by talking over anyone who disagrees with him. When I pushed back, his voice rose an octave — 'Of course I think that! Why wouldn't I think that?' he said at one point — and it felt like we were slipping into theater. I'd learn as much about Carlson this way as I would if I sat down with a classically trained actor, threw a Shakespeare script on the table and asked for a performance. So I focused on questions about who he is. We already know what he believes; what's more interesting is how he got here.

"Carlson invited me to Fox News's



Washington, D.C. studio for a live taping of his show. I sat in a corner and watched him introduce segments such as 'The Extreme Left' and 'Antifa Exposed,' angrily making his case to an otherwise empty room. During commercial breaks he was all smiles, listening to the *Grateful Dead* — his favourite — and making wisecracks that had nothing to do with politics.

"A few hours earlier, Carlson and I had a pre-show lunch at Bistro Bis, one of his regular haunts, a few blocks from Capitol Hill. He was charming and gregarious, with a big laugh that filled the restaurant. He talked as though he were late for a bus: Every sentence out of his mouth was delivered with an 'I've just got to make this one more point before

I go' urgency. He ate stinky cheese — that's the way he ordered it: 'Give me a plate of your stinkiest cheese' — and laughed at how writing a book encourages the unhealthiest habits. 'Give me another Twix bar,' shouted the former smoker and current nicotine-gum enthusiast. 'I'm on deadline!'"

**PLAYBOY:** How many packs of nicotine gum did it take to finish the new book?

**CARLSON:** Incalculable. I've been on lozenges as well as the gum.

**PLAYBOY:** What's the difference?

**CARLSON:** [*Reaches into pocket and empties several packages of gum and lozenges onto the table*] You can't use the lozenges on television because you get white foam around your mouth, and they tend to make your voice hoarse. But the beauty of the lozenge is it's an extremely efficient means of delivery. If it's a twomilligram lozenge, you're definitely getting two milligrams. None of it's escaping.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you have a pack of cigarettes stashed somewhere, in case of emergency?

**CARLSON:** I have one in my office. It's a pack of Dunhills, given to me by Hunter S. Thompson just a few weeks before he died. I had this long, amazing dinner with him and Sean Penn in a restaurant in New Orleans.

**PLAYBOY:** It's hard to imagine you dining with Hunter Thompson, much less Sean Penn. Isn't Penn, you know, super liberal?

**CARLSON:** Believe it or not, I actually like Sean Penn. He's interesting. He smoked quite a few that night. He's going to wind up in the emphysema ward, that guy. Anyway, Hunter was wearing a medallion, almost like an Al Sharpton medallion. He didn't talk a lot at dinner, but when I got up from the table to leave, he hugged me so hard the medallion pressed into me and really hurt. Then he gave me the Dunhills and stared at me intensely. I knew he was going to die.

**PLAYBOY:** Come on.

**CARLSON:** I did! I could just tell. It was bizarre. There was only one cigarette in the pack, and I still have it today. Obviously I'd never smoke it.

**PLAYBOY:** Under what circumstances would you start smoking again?

**CARLSON:** I had a cigarette on election night back in 2016. I bummed one off of one of Megyn Kelly's producers at, like, one in the morning. We were all at headquarters on Sixth Avenue and there was all this drama going on, all this



tension on the set. It was just one of those moments when you need to step outside for a minute. It was a Camel Light, and I took the filter off. It didn't taste very good, honestly.

**PLAYBOY:** The election may have been shocking enough to make you smoke, but what do you make of Trump today?

**CARLSON:** Trump is the greatest thing ever, because he short-circuits people's brains and they become all brainstem: "Whatever Trump is for, I'm against!" The reason I think I do a pretty good show is because I'm the only person in America who's not that interested in Trump. My book that just came out I think mentions Trump three times. I know Trump well. I think he has good qualities and bad qualities. I think he's funny, I think he's pretty brave, I think he's got good instincts, I think he's disorganised, I think he's got terrible taste in staff. There are a lot of problems with Trump. But in the end, I don't think he's the most compelling figure in world history. What's more interesting is why people would elect Trump.

**PLAYBOY:** Has there been an explanation you agree with?

**CARLSON:** The explanations we've been force-fed by everybody are so dumb, they're clearly a cover for the truth. "All his supporters are racist!"—that kind of thing. Of course it's nonsense. The real reason is because the fundamentals in the country are completely out of whack.

**PLAYBOY:** How are they out of whack?

**CARLSON:** Markets are supposed to reflect productivity and profits, right? I made this much last year, and on the basis of that metric, you decide how much my company is worth. That's just basic economics, and it has been discarded completely in favor of the Amazon model, based on promises and "I've got a good story to tell." The root of it is Fed policy. It's the federal government, under President Obama, deciding to avoid economic reality by flooding the system with cheap dollars. The long-term effect is obviously economic collapse, but in the short term it dramatically exacerbates economic inequality, so only people above a certain threshold can participate in the bounty. In other words, it makes a small number incredibly rich.

**PLAYBOY:** And the middle class disappears.

**CARLSON:** Exactly! That is the pivotal disaster of the past 10 years, which is never commented on. It's all like, "You're a racist!" Okay, fine. But do you notice that rich people are richer than they've ever been and everybody else is stagnating? Maybe that's the root of our political volatility. Maybe economics plays a role.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you think the U.S. is getting a class system?

**CARLSON:** We've always had a class system, because every society is hierarchical. But our class system has always been permeable; it was designed to be. People can fall out of

the upper echelons; inherited-money people often do, thanks to alcohol and cocaine. Smart, enterprising people can, of course, ascend. That's the American dream, right? Well, that has changed. The story of the last generation is that in 2015 the country stopped being a majority middle-class country. And no one even noticed. That's not a story compared to racism.

**PLAYBOY:** But both stories can be simultaneously important, right? There actually is racism in the world, in our own country. You're not denying that, are you?

**CARLSON:** Of course not. But this is actually the story. The only way you have a democracy is with a middle-class majority. Otherwise you become, what, Venezuela? You can't have a political system that gives every person a vote in a country where the economy excludes the majority. Because the majority will bite back. And how will they do that? It's always the same way: through populism. Either it's left-wing populism — Cuba, Chavez — really

## *The bottom line is the middle class is dying. That makes the country volatile.*

left-wing populism — Lenin — or it's Donald Trump.

**PLAYBOY:** The pendulum could swing in either direction?

**CARLSON:** Exactly. It's the revolt of people who are economically disenfranchised but politically enfranchised. If you're going to have a lopsided society, with rich and poor, like in Latin America, you can't have a democracy. What you have is an oligarchy. We have a country where a small number of people are getting richer than any group has ever become in human history. Needless to say, they're covering their tracks. Why wouldn't they encourage greater racial conflicts, which they're doing, and make everything about identity? What faster way to divert attention from their own crimes, misdeeds and bad decisions than that?

**PLAYBOY:** Are you optimistic about the fu—

**CARLSON:** No.

**PLAYBOY:** We couldn't even get it out.

**CARLSON:** Because you have to solve for

that. It's not about all this other stuff, which is so dumb. My great frustration is the level of analysis. Because that's what I do; I'm in the analysis business. It's not that people disagree with me. That's fine. What's not okay is having the wrong conversation, or intentionally misdirecting from what matters to things that are irrelevant, which is 99 percent of what we talk about. The bottom line is the middle class is dying. That makes the country politically volatile, and volatility destroys what you want. What you want are stable, happy institutions run by stable, happy people. Volatility gives you the opposite. It destroys institutions and makes everyone crazy. Where does that volatility come from? It comes from economic inequality. That's the story. And no one is thinking about how to fix it.

**PLAYBOY:** Is it true you start your day by reading the newspaper obituaries?

**CARLSON:** Every morning.

**PLAYBOY:** Isn't that a bit morbid?

**CARLSON:** Not at all. People who brood about death are the happiest people.

**PLAYBOY:** How so?

**CARLSON:** Because they've acknowledged reality and have come to terms with it. I grew up in southern California, in La Jolla, which was this weird little affluent community where you could literally do or say anything. It was culturally liberal in the deepest sense. If you wanted to run off with your stepister or join the circus, no one was going to judge you. The only thing you weren't allowed to acknowledge was death. Nobody ever died in La Jolla. That was verboten. There were no funerals. People just got in their black Mercedes-Benz, drove to Palm Desert and were never heard from again. You weren't allowed to mention death because it suggested we're not in control of everything. "He's dead?"

Really? But he didn't smoke. He ate sensibly. I saw him eating avocados last week. He can't be dead."

**PLAYBOY:** Do you enjoy funerals?

**CARLSON:** I don't enjoy them, but I believe in rituals. I never miss a funeral. Or a baptism or a wedding. I go to every wedding, whether I'm invited or not.

**PLAYBOY:** You crash weddings?

**CARLSON:** I went to a wedding recently that I wasn't invited to. It was an old friend of mine, and I ran into his brother at the gym. He was like, "My brother is getting married next weekend." I was like, "Really? Nobody invited me." He said, "Oh, it's a small family thing." I said, "When is it?" He said, "It's in Atlanta next Saturday at four." I flew from D.C. to Atlanta, took a cab to the wedding, sat in the church for the ceremony and then came home.

**PLAYBOY:** You didn't stay for the reception?

**CARLSON:** No, that would've been weird. I wasn't invited.

**PLAYBOY:** Does reading obituaries feel like a





form of ritual, acknowledging the end of someone's life, even if you never knew them?

**CARLSON:** Yes. It's respect due to a person who has passed, but it's also a mini-biography. They tend to be nonpolitical, which I appreciate. I can't handle sneaky editorializing right when I wake up, because I'm too sensitive. I want a story like "He died, and here's what he did." It's usually stuff like "The guy who developed the eye test chart died." It's an acknowledgement that your time is limited. You don't have forever. And that's the sweetness of it.

**PLAYBOY:** You had a near-death experience with a plane crash, right?

**CARLSON:** Yeah. It totally changed my life. **PLAYBOY:** What happened?

**CARLSON:** This was mid-October 2001. I'd gone to Pakistan for New York magazine to cover the Taliban. I was flying from Islamabad to Peshawar, on the Afghan border, to Dubai. It was right after 9/11, so everyone was paranoid about air travel. I was sitting in first class on a big Airbus, and everyone was chain-smoking Marlboros. There were clouds of cigarette smoke, but no alcohol was allowed. We stop in Peshawar, and all these randoms file in and sit on the floor of the cockpit and smoke cigarettes. It made me nervous. This was not a First World thing to do. So we took off again, and because of the bombings in Afghanistan, we had to fly the long way around, over Iran. It ended up being a four-hour flight. Around two in the morning, we're starting to descend. All of a sudden, bam, the plane just stops.

**PLAYBOY:** Midair?

**CARLSON:** It felt like we'd hit a building. And then the plane starts to drop. The engines rev and the plane turns sideways. It's clear we're crashing, no doubt about it. People are screaming. We finally touch down and bounce right off the runway. The right wing snaps off and all these sparks are coming up. Everyone knows we're going to die.

**PLAYBOY:** Were you thinking, I should have lived my life differently?

**CARLSON:** Yes, that's exactly what goes through my mind. I'm also thinking about all the ways I've been unfair to other people. You'd think in the face of imminent death you'd be like, "This is happening, it's inevitable, and I'm peaceful about it. I was not peaceful at all. So the plane goes into a sand dune and ends up on its side. I was the first person off. I kicked open the door, the slide came down, I ran into the darkness and immediately got picked up by guards. I was brought to a room, locked in there and then put on a British Airways flight eight hours later. It was totally bizarre.

**PLAYBOY:** Did you ever find out what happened to the plane?

**CARLSON:** Not immediately, but five years

later, a friend of mine was having dinner with one of the directors of Airbus in London and asked about the flight. He said they believed there was an explosive device in the cargo hold. I have no idea if that's true.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you still traumatised by it? **CARLSON:** Not anymore, but I was at the time. A year after it happened, I quit drinking and my wife and I had another child. We had three kids already, but both my wife and I, independently, were like, "We're having another kid."

**PLAYBOY:** Does it still make you skittish to get on a plane?

**CARLSON:** No. It makes me a total fatalist. Before that happened, I was totally convinced that the safety of any flight depended on the intensity of my hopes. Now I understand I have no control over anything.

**PLAYBOY:** Not just whether you die on a plane?

**CARLSON:** I control nothing! Or almost nothing. I can control what I say on TV, and I

## *First of all, I'm not a debater. That's not how I think of it. I don't need to win.*

can control how I treat my wife and children. But I can't control anything else. The second you realise that, the anxiety falls away. I could get hit by a car walking out of this restaurant. I'm not saying that in a sad way; I'm saying that in a happy way. It takes a lot off the table. All of a sudden, I didn't care about a lot of things I used to care about. I've been in a pretty good mood since.

**PLAYBOY:** Your other near-death experience was getting ousted by CNN.

**CARLSON:** It happened here, in this restaurant, in that booth right over there. Actually, I never got fired by CNN. I just lost my show.

**PLAYBOY:** Did you see it coming?

**CARLSON:** I had no idea. I never say this, because it sounds like sour grapes, but I wanted to get out of Crossfire. I got an offer from Rick Kaplan [then president] at MSNBC, who was trying to make MSNBC into a rival for Fox News. The offer was more than twice what I was making at CNN. So I called Jon Klein, who was then the president

at CNN, and said, "I'm leaving." He said, "Godspeed." I went to lunch, and when I got back, I had like 27 messages from journalists, asking "Can we get your statement on your firing?" CNN issued a statement saying I'd been canned. I've never been that shocked in my life. I called Klein immediately and said, "Do I have this right? The official story of CNN is that I've been fired?" He told me, and I quote, "It's business."

**PLAYBOY:** Like a character in *The Godfather*?

**CARLSON:** Exactly. A few years ago I was sitting on a plane, having just landed, and the first story I pulled up on my phone was "Jon Klein fired from CNN." I'd made this commitment to myself that when he got fired — and I always knew he would — I would call him and say, "I know everyone is calling with their condolences, but I want to do the opposite and say please I am that you're fired. I hope this leads to years of suffering, because it's well deserved."

**PLAYBOY:** Did you do it?

**CARLSON:** I called him and he picked up, but there was this voice in my head that said, "Don't do that." So I hung up. I never said anything to him, even though he deserved it.

**PLAYBOY:** In your first book, *Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites*, you write that a question you're often asked by liberals is "You don't really believe all that, do you?"

**CARLSON:** All the time. I got that last week: "You're too smart." Really? I'm live five hours a week. If you're phony, people know instantly. It reveals who you really are.

**PLAYBOY:** Is that just you or everyone on cable news?

**CARLSON:** All of them. This is the opposite of what everyone wants to think, but most people in cable news,

even those I despise — and there are a lot of those — are exactly what you think they're like.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you tell your guests, "I'm going to come after you hard; get ready?"

**CARLSON:** I don't typically talk to guests beforehand. Sometimes our booker tells me there's a guest who wants to come on, but he's nervous. He thinks I'm going to pull a fast one or that I'm a mean person or alright or whatever. I always say, "Give me their cell and I'll call them." If they want to know, I'll tell them exactly what I'm going to ask. I never lie. I'll say, "These are the three questions I'm going to ask you, in this order."

**PLAYBOY:** What about your interview with *Teen Vogue* writer Lauren Duca? You were talking about whether Ivanka Trump is accountable for her dad's presidency, and Duca looked frustrated when you asked her about something she'd written about Ariana Grande. You ended that segment by telling her to "stick to the thigh-high boots."





**CARLSON:** Well, I was shell-shocked. This woman said things I didn't agree with, but I didn't think I was going to have a contentious argument with her. She made me so mad because she was so unreasonable, which made me unreasonable, and I snapped at her. That had the consequence — unintended, I can promise you — of making her famous. And then she got a college commencement address as a response to that, which was moronerie. I watched the address. She's dumber than I thought.

**PLAYBOY:** So you're not bitter.

**CARLSON:** [Laughs] Listen, I should never have had her on or been mean to her. At this point it's just stupid that it ever happened, and I'm never mentioning this person again. In general, though, the thing people always say is "You're just a great debater." First of all, I'm not a debater. That's not how I think of it. I host a show every night. I don't need to win.

**PLAYBOY:** It can seem like you need to win.

**CARLSON:** I don't need to!

**PLAYBOY:** If it's not a debate, what is it?

**CARLSON:** I view it as a way of clarifying what's actually going on. And by the way, I fall short of that a lot. But that's my ideal. And listen, I've had many people on who, even if I didn't agree with them — well, here's an example. I interviewed this vegan whose view is you should never eat meat. For me, that's pretty easy: sad little vegan guy I can make fun of. So I tell him, "How dare you tell me what to eat! Why is that your business? Maybe I want to live on the Butterfingers diet. I have before."

**PLAYBOY:** How did that work out for you?

**CARLSON:** Not well; that's why I'm not on it anymore. Anyway, the vegan tells me, "I see what you mean, but the world champion weight-lifter right now is a vegan. I never tell anybody what to eat. I'm just telling you this works and here's why." I actually said to the guy on air, "I was going to be mean to you, but I kind of agree with this."

**PLAYBOY:** What makes you irate with a guest?

**CARLSON:** What makes me combative is when we start having a theological conversation. Eighty percent of my left-of-center guests want to take a political conversation and make it theological. It's not about what's best for the country; it's who's going to heaven and who's going to hell.

**PLAYBOY:** You're talking about liberals?

**CARLSON:** It's the argument of "I'm a good person." Immigration is a perfect example. It's clear that the beneficiaries of mass low-wage immigration are rich people, because guess who washes our underwear. We have a whole new servant class we don't need to feel guilty about because they don't

speak our language and we're their saviors. The foreignborn worker isn't going to complain about minimum wage, especially if he's illegal. He's too grateful. By the way, this isn't an attack on immigrants. They're really impressive, a lot of them. I'm just worried about the effect on native-born Americans, who are the people to whom our leaders have an obligation. So I'll make that point, and I don't think that's a right-wing point at all.

**PLAYBOY:** Immigrants taking jobs from native-born Americans isn't a right-wing point?

**CARLSON:** It's not. In fact, it's the point of organized labor. César Chávez made that point. This is what labor leaders have said for a hundred years. They opposed immigration for this reason. I think it's totally defensible. You may disagree, but let's talk about why. The response, 99 percent of the time, is "The Statue of Liberty demands that we do this and you're immoral and a racist if you don't." I'm sorry, I'm not talking about my

## *I like Rachel Maddow. She's an ideologue. That's not an attack on her at all.*

soul and whether I'm a good person or not. I don't think I'm an especially good person, but that's not what this is about. Aren't we supposed to be having a rational conversation about the best next move for the country?

**PLAYBOY:** Did growing up near the border shape your views on immigration?

**CARLSON:** Because I grew up surrounded by Mexicans and they were all rich?

**PLAYBOY:** You knew only rich Mexicans?

**CARLSON:** It was a totally different dynamic. These days, when we talk about Mexicans, it's like everybody is a starving campesino from Oaxaca. In real life, it's a diverse country with a stratified class system and a lot of complexity. There's a lot of racial tension within Mexico, and a lot of shades of grey. In my world as a child, a Mexican man was someone with a house in Switzerland. It was a big-time destination for ruling-class Mexicans. It's a lot more complicated than we pretend it is.

**PLAYBOY:** Does it bother you when a neo-Nazi website like the Daily Stormer calls you

"literally our greatest ally"?

**CARLSON:** I don't want to get into it, because it sounds disingenuous, but I'm 49 years old and I don't think I've ever met a white supremacist. I've been to every state at least twice. I've travelled a lot and talked to everyone. I talk to every Uber driver and every bartender and every lady dropping off the dry cleaning. I talk to everybody all the time. I've never met anyone who's like, "I want a white ethno-state."

**PLAYBOY:** Are you saying you don't think white supremacists exist?

**CARLSON:** No. I don't doubt they exist. But the idea that white nationalism is a mainstream position is just absurd. I'm sure there are people who will defend North Korea. I had one on my show. But let's be real: Neither that nor white nationalism is a relevant position to the current debate. I don't think I'm an extremist. I'm pretty moderate by temperament.

**PLAYBOY:** You consider yourself a moderate?

**CARLSON:** I do. But I feel I'm way out where no one else is because I see this as an economic crisis and nobody else seems to. Actually, that's not true. You know who else does? Some people on the way-out left.

**PLAYBOY:** Such as?

**CARLSON:** I don't want to say, because I don't want to admit that I talk to them. But if you were to go through my texts, which you're not allowed to do, you would be shocked by the number of hard-left people on my text exchange.

**PLAYBOY:** You're texting with Bernie Sanders? Paul Krugman? Jon Stewart?

**CARLSON:** [Laughs] God no! Let's just say there's a lot my hard-left friends and I don't agree on. I'm adamantly

against abortion. I think I'm the only one on television who ever talks about it. I'm definitely the only Episcopalian who feels that way. But there are things we agree on. For example, they're not interested in the identity-politics crap, because it's stupid. It's for children. It's also a dead end. Where do you think that winds up? My tribe is better than your tribe? We get Tutus and Hutus, that's where that goes.

**PLAYBOY:** What do you know about your audience? Are they hard right, somewhere in the middle or something else?

**CARLSON:** It's hard to know. My sense is... [pauses] I don't know. A lot of them think, correctly, that the leadership of both parties, and the financial, cultural, intellectual and technological leadership of this country, have contempt for them.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you agree?

**CARLSON:** I think they're right, 100 percent.

**PLAYBOY:** You said something on your show this past summer that raised some eyebrows.

**CARLSON:** Just one thing?

**PLAYBOY:** You said, "If you're looking to



understand what's actually happening in this country, always assume the opposite of whatever they're telling you on the big news stations." Do you believe that?

**CARLSON:** I feel that way strongly.

**PLAYBOY:** All the big news stations are lying?

**CARLSON:** I believe that completely. It's 100 percent true. Let me give you the Syria example: In April, we watched a cruise-missile attack on Syria based on the claim that Assad had gassed his own people. If you actually called the State Department and the Department of Defense, which people did, and asked, "Are there American inspectors on the ground? How do you know that?" the response you'd get was "Well, we don't really know that." Really?

Because I didn't read that in *The New York Times*. I read the claims of the government reported as fact. That's a lie. Not only is that a lie, that's a lie with real consequences. People died as a result. So no, they're not interested in telling stories that are outside a narrowly prescribed set of themes they think are okay. Look, you know the truth, which is people feel they have a bigger obligation now — not just to the truth but to keeping the crazy right wing from taking over. If you think you have a bigger obligation to the service of a political mission, that's not journalism; it's something else.

**PLAYBOY:** But people interpreted your comment not as "Mainstream media has some bias problems" but as "Watch Fox News because everyone else is lying."

**CARLSON:** I don't need to make that case to Fox viewers. I'm just noticing it. I would also say that this is not some crazy idea I picked up from Twitter. I've been in journalism for 27 years. The people you see on television? I know them well. In some cases, I know them really well. I've been to their weddings. I have a tangible sense of who these people are and what their motives are. If you hear me weighing in on hydraulic fracking, you should probably disregard what I'm saying, because I'm not an engineer. But if you hear me weighing in on the state of the Washington media, I've been doing this my whole life, so I think I know what I'm talking about.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you still believe what you said in your 2009 CPAC speech, about the factgathering of *The New York Times* and how conservatives should try to do the same?

**CARLSON:** Just get the dates right; how does

that sound? Just be professional about it; that's all I was saying. My view is, these institutions are hostile to you and your interests, and will never not be. You have two choices: You can whine about that in perpetuity, or you can try to create your own thing. Why wouldn't you? Aren't conservatives always talking about entrepreneurship, bootstrapping, the wonders of the market? If what you say is true, the market has a vacuum and you should be able to get rich filling it. No one ever has, by the way. I don't really know why.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you saying there is no conservative version of *The New York Times*?

**CARLSON:** No. I think things will change because there are so many smart young

of the internet.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you find it challenging to make sure facts are front and centre on your show?

**CARLSON:** Not at all. We rarely make factual errors.

**PLAYBOY:** Really?

**CARLSON:** Really! Because so many people are watching and waiting for us to do that. I had a show last week, we were talking about the amendment to change the constitution of South Africa in order to take land without compensation. At one point I said, "It's already happened," and at another point I corrected myself, saying that it hadn't happened, but it was imminent. I got dozens of people who were like, "You were wrong!" Yeah, but I corrected it immediately. I misspoke. Whatever. I'm not whining, I'm just saying we have to be accurate. For me, the challenge is, are we honest? That's the challenge. That's harder than being accurate. Accuracy is a baseline requirement. But are you really telling the truth? The real truth?

**PLAYBOY:** What are your thoughts about Rachel Maddow? You gave her one of her first TV gigs on your MSNBC show, right?

**PLAYBOY:** I did. I really like Rachel Maddow. She's an ideologue. That's not an attack on her at all. Rachel is sincere. She doesn't say things she doesn't believe, and she's not playing a role. The biggest compliment I can give her, and it's heartfelt, is that Rachel does her own thing. She doesn't have a lot of contact with MSNBC management, as far as I understand. I don't think she likes them, and I don't think they like her. I could be wrong. But my sense is that Rachel does the show that she wants to do.

**PLAYBOY:** As opposed to?

**CARLSON:** Almost every other person on TV news. When you watch Rachel Maddow's lead, it may or may not bear a resemblance to what *The New York Times* led with. Most TV hosts and producers don't really know what's going on. They follow the lead of somebody else. But the ones who are successful, who you remember, whether you love them or hate them, are deciding for themselves what the news is. That's why we're paid.

**PLAYBOY:** You get paid to decide what the news is? Are you sure that's true?

**CARLSON:** It's absolutely true. What's our job? Our job is to decide what's important and why. Fox has never, in the two years I've had the show, said, "You can't do that."



people, and I'm not talking about right-wingers. I mean anyone with heterodox ideas, anyone who thinks for himself. We're in a moment of total mandatory conformity. Anyone who thinks outside the perimeters must be punished. Most people will go along with that, because most people are compliant. They don't want any hassle. But there is some percentage of smart young people — again, I'm not talking about right-wingers; I'm talking about hardleft people too — who are like, "You know, I'm not going to obey." You always hear people say, "I can't believe the radicalism on the internet!" Why do you think that is? People aren't allowed to say in public things they think are self-evidently true, so it drives them into the dark recesses





I have pure editorial control. So does Rachel Maddow. You can tell.

**PLAYBOY:** You used to work at CNN. Were you ever told what you could or couldn't say?

**CARLSON:** It may be different now, but when I was there, there were network-wide mandatory directives. I'm sure Anderson Cooper can basically do what he wants, but there is an internal "this is what we're covering today" mandate. Fox has never been like that. No one has ever told me what to do.

**PLAYBOY:** You once said you stay relaxed when doing the show by imagining that only your wife is watching. Does she watch every night, and if so, does she give you feedback?

**CARLSON:** She watches all the time, but we don't talk about work or about politics. Actually, that's starting to change. Since our last child, our fourth child, left home, we'll talk about politics occasionally.

**PLAYBOY:** She knows how you argue. Can you win any argument ever again?

**CARLSON:** I never argue with my wife.

**PLAYBOY:** You're kidding.

**CARLSON:** Of course not. Argue with my wife? Why would anybody argue with their wife? What would you get out of it? Do you win?

[laughs] What does final victory look like? Just describe that to me. Does she put all four paws in the air and say, "You're absolutely right." What's the payoff? Is there a psychic victory? But I can honestly say that we have identical views on almost everything.

**PLAYBOY:** Your mom left when you were young. Did you have any interest in tracking her down?

**CARLSON:** Not really. I would just sum it up by saying she was a woman who left her two children for a foreign country and never came back. Probably there were some other things going on. It's not typical. I mean, most mothers, no matter how incompetent or drunk, don't leave their children. They're just hard-wired not to. There are exceptions, obviously — I grew up with one — but it's unusual behaviour.

**PLAYBOY:** That absence is not something you just get over.

**CARLSON:** It defined my childhood. [pauses]

You know, the funny thing about that, and one of the reasons I've never talked about it, is there's no winning. Either you lie and say, "I'm so wounded by that." Or you tell the truth and sound like a sociopath. In my case, the truth is my childhood wasn't that bad. It was actually pretty fun. I love my dad. Losing my mom was sad, I guess. My parents got divorced because my mom was a nutcase. Boo-hoo, poor me. But my dad got remarried to a wonderful woman, my stepmom, whom I love. I always worried I was suppressing all this rage. I used to say to my girlfriend, now wife, "What am I going to do if she ever reappears?" Then I actually did get the call,

and it turned out she was living in remote France, in the Pyrénées mountains, working as a sculptor.

**PLAYBOY:** Who found her?

**CARLSON:** My aunt, a woman I hadn't talked to since 1977. She called me and said, "Your mother's dying." That didn't even make sense to me. "My mother? Who's my mother?" And she said, "Your mother. You know, my sister."

**PLAYBOY:** What was she dying from?

**CARLSON:** Lung cancer. From smoking, actually. This was several years ago. I hadn't heard her voice since she left when I was six. So my aunt said, "She's dying and she's going to be gone soon. You've got to go visit her." I thought about it, and I said, "No, I don't think I do."

**PLAYBOY:** You had nothing you needed to say to her?

**CARLSON:** Not particularly. After that phone call, I went home and had dinner and went to bed and slept fine. It didn't really

## Why would anybody argue with their wife? What would you get out of it? Do you win?

have a big effect on me. I guess it had been so long, and time goes by. I don't think I'm shallow. I care what people think, or at least the people I love. But I was over it, I guess. I said to my wife, "Remember how I used to say I was going to fall apart, that it would all come rushing back? It didn't." I felt sorry for her. I wasn't mad at her anymore. It was just kind of sad, this woman dying alone in a foreign country.

**PLAYBOY:** You're still close with your dad?

**CARLSON:** Very close. I've never had a conversation with him where he didn't say "I love you" at the end.

**PLAYBOY:** What's the best piece of advice your dad ever gave you?

**CARLSON:** I was going to write a whole book of advice he gave me. He's a legitimate genius. He was against direct statements of advice, any directives at all. Every Saturday during our childhoods, from first grade until I went to boarding school, he would take my brother and me to the movies. We'd always load up on popcorn and Milk Duds, massive

Cokes and 7-Ups. I'd always have to take a leak by the end of the movie, and my father would corral us away from the bathrooms and say, "No, wait." We would walk out to the parking lot, and the three of us would take a leak on the tires of a station wagon. One week my brother said, "Pop, why are we doing this? Why can't we use the bathroom?" My father said, "Never lose touch with your inner dog, boys." What he was saying was the overwhelming majority of bad decisions come not from following your gut but from ignoring it.

**PLAYBOY:** What are your dad's politics?

**CARLSON:** He isn't political. He's never been. He was always an intellectual, a book-a-day guy, an intense-ideas guy. But he doesn't talk like an intellectual at all. He doesn't use any of the buzzwords. He never said things like "Well, that's problematic."

**PLAYBOY:** What do you two talk about?

**CARLSON:** What don't we talk about? It's not like when you see somebody you haven't talked to in years. My whole world hasn't changed all that much. I married my high school girlfriend, and my business partner is my college roommate. I keep the circle small. If I love something, I don't give up on it. I go to only one restaurant. I would be very easy to assassinate.

**PLAYBOY:** You've lived in D.C. since you were 15, but you talk about how phony it is on your show.

**CARLSON:** Oh, I object to it on all kinds of abstract levels, but as a practical matter, it's a great city to live in. I'll never leave Washington. I've never not loved it. The pomposity and high self-regard are almost unbearable, but the good news is our neighbourhood is stable. It's totally crime-free, everyone's nice, we've got full employment, all the kids are

above average, the restaurants are improving. It's 1965 America, before the riots. And it's not political here; that's the other thing. It's so political that it's nonpolitical.

**PLAYBOY:** What does that mean?

**CARLSON:** I had dinner last night with my wife and two other couples. They're our neighbours and we've known them most of our lives. All four of them are liberal Democrats. One of them is a well-known Democratic political consultant. They obviously know my views, but I would never have a political argument with them.

**PLAYBOY:** Is that because it's face-to-face and it's your neighbour? Nobody is going to start screaming, "You're a Nazi!"

**CARLSON:** Of course not. Because both of you know the other person isn't a Nazi. If the tree in your yard is hanging into your neighbour's yard and you pay to have it pruned, that goes a long way to making him understand that political differences aren't definitive. They don't have to be moral differences. This is all just politics. ■



A woman with long dark hair is lying on her back on a sandy beach. She is wearing a dark green one-shoulder top and a thin gold necklace. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her hands are clasped near her face. The background shows the ocean waves and a distant shoreline under a clear blue sky.

# SHELLEY *Jane*

*Photography by* **RYAN DWYER** *Produced by* **MAINSTREET PRODUCTIONS**  
*MUA* **BRIDGET MARTINEZ**











**Tell us something surprising about you?**

I love fantasy movies and adult cartoons.

**Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?**

Yes, such a fun shoot!

**What inspires you?**

Movers, shakers and world changers

**Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?**

I enjoy being in front of the camera

**Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?**

Anna Nicole Smith, Claudia Schiffer, and Farrah Fawcett

**What are some of your hobbies?**

Traveling, naked yoga, and crypto trading.

**Name three things on your bucket list?**

Music album, published life book, and scuba diving.

**Turn-ons**

Intelligence, humour, charming and can mind fuck me a lil'

**Turn-offs**

Broken promises and lies, not being a man of your word.

**Describe to us your perfect date**

A surprise random trip to beautiful destination and romantic dinner on the beach.

**Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?**

Malé in Maldives, I love the water bungalow's, just wake up and dive in the ocean.

**What is your mantra?**

Let go and live.













# Changing the World With Your Wallet

*The way we spend our money is a daily weapon for reform. Here, America's most renowned consumer advocate makes the case for direct citizen action*

BY **RALPH NADER**

Speaking before college audiences, I often ask, "How many of you have never been to a McDonald's or a Walmart?" No hands go up — except mine. I explain that I've never given my consumer dollars to McDonald's because of its deadly menu of fat, sugar and salt that has increased youth obesity for two generations. I've similarly refused to give my money to Walmart because of its low wages and unfair competitive practices that crush small businesses.

If you're concerned about the impact your money has on the world after it leaves your pocket, you need to define your consumer preferences. In an internet age it's easy to research brands to see if you agree with their positions on political candidates and their stands on diversity and nondiscrimination. But rarely do enough consumers vote with their dollars to send a clear and convincing message to companies that need to change.

Why? First, it can be difficult. Wells Fargo, the regulation-resisting bank with about 5,800 branches, was finally exposed after two recent crimes: Over the course of 2016 and 2017 it was discovered that the financial institution had created up to 3.5 million fake accounts and made unnecessary auto-insurance purchases for more than 800,000 unknowing customers. The media reported the details of these crimes extensively. The bank had to pay millions of dollars in restitution and fines, regulators put a temporary moratorium on its capital expansion, and the bosses stepped down, ample pay packages in hand. But what the bank's directors feared most was loss of customers and an enduring stock-price collapse. That didn't happen — because as everybody knows, switching banks is complicated, inconvenient and time-consuming.

Second, consumers may have limited options. If you have a small income or live in a rural area with few if any alternatives to Walmart and Amazon, it's difficult to leverage your consumer dollars for better business practices.

And then there are the subtler methods practiced by tech giants such as Facebook and Google. When a company gives you something

for free, you become the product. Information about your private life is central to the business model of these giant internet companies. You're unlikely to simply say "I want out" of your social networks after learning that Facebook has shared your personal data with everyone who wants it anywhere in the world. But when you click "accept" on those encyclopedic terms and conditions, you lose control of your online privacy, and your data profile grows by the day.

Our government, heavily lobbied by Silicon Valley, will not require Facebook to provide an opt-in button. To opt out from Facebook and its ilk requires willpower. When news broke that the social network had allowed unsavory companies to obtain information about tens

identity.

Sleeping Giants is a Twitter account that informs advertisers of consumers' disdain for companies or news sites that fail to oppose bigotry, racism, sexism and hate-mongering. This public outing of abusers has caused thousands of companies to cancel their advertising contracts for fear of being accused of supporting media outlets or personalities — such as Fox's Bill O'Reilly — whose behaviour contradicts customer values or corporate policies. This collateral pressure works (though at times, like all mass movements, it can go to extremes).

You can be a "pick and choose" consumer based on your political values without sacrificing a good deal. I know people who won't buy gas from ExxonMobil because of the company's long-standing cover-up of and resistance to regulations dealing with climate disinformation. Years ago, consumers troubled by Philip Morris' control of congressional politicians and promotion of smoking refused to purchase products from the company's food subsidiaries. And when it comes to environmental malefactors like the Koch brothers, consumers can penalise them — and help themselves and the planet at the same time — by practicing energy conservation. Solar panels and products made from renewable resources are good places to start.

However, it's worth adding that consumers don't have to open their wallets for corporations to change practices. Notice how many powerful executives were immediately dismissed after facing credible accusations of sexual harassment, assault and rape. Companies ranging from Fox News to Morgan Stanley couldn't ignore the waves of condemnation from consumers, workers and citizen action groups. Reporting by the mass media helped accelerate the process.

Remember, consumer spending accounts for more than two thirds of our economy. Even a small portion of that dollar power could be used to advance our country's health, safety and moral strength. Protest with your spending choices. ■

## Dollar power could advance our country's moral strength.

of millions of its customers, hundreds of thousands of them closed their accounts. This protest hardly made a dent. Facebook still has more than 2 billion users worldwide, including more than half the U.S. population. But Mr. Zuckerberg definitely felt the cautionary tremors.

Another difficulty is presented by the rightwing and very politically active Koch brothers. Together they're worth more than \$100 billion, mainly from giant oil, gas and chemical enterprises. They lobby for corporation-friendly judges and against even minimal taxation. But they have no recognisable logo or brand presence at the retail level.

What can you do? First, educate yourself. It's easy to find out which companies belong to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce or other trade associations that push for weaker environmental standards, higher drug prices, more tax escapes for big businesses or tort restrictions that weaken access to our courts by wrongfully injured persons. This will expose companies with no visible consumer brand or



# DRAWN DATA

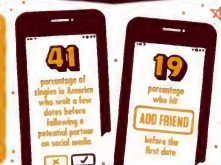
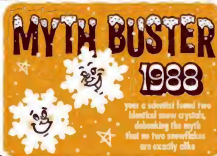
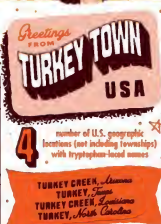
PLAYBOY PROUDLY PRESENTS

ILLUSTRATED BY TIMBA

NEW EDITION

SIGNIFICA, INSIGNIFICA.

STATS AND FACTS



# DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

*You're never too young to wax nostalgic for holidays past — or too old to wish for the season's defining trends. This year we celebrate the best of both worlds with a gift guide that showcases how well the classics (Brando-esque moto jackets) mesh with innovation (sex toys on demand)*



## BIT PLAYERS

### FEEL THE FUTURE

A PlayStation VR bundle adds virtual-reality technology to the PS4, turning it from a gaming console to a gateway into immersive adventures and heart-pounding battles. PlayStation VR.

### REPEAT THE PAST

Remember Boulder Dash, California Games and Parodroid? Revisit the video games of the 1980s with this scaled-down replica of the Commodore 64. C64 Mini retro gaming console.





## SOUND MINDS

### GET UP AND GO

V-Moda's latest wireless headphones look impressively modern, but audiophiles will appreciate them for their utility: Bluetooth pairing and a 14-hour-plus battery life ensure you're covered during long trips, whether by land or air. V-Moda Crossfade 2 wireless headphones.

### THORENS AND CHILL

Who needs a wood-burning fireplace when you can curl up with a loved one in front of a Thorens record player? This traditional wood model is a high-performance beauty. Dig out your favorite vinyl (we recommend Jorja Smith's *Lost & Found*) and bask in the ageless warmth of analog sound.



## STYLE ICONS

## TRADE UP FOR NEW KICKS

Virgil Abloh is disrupting the fashion world as artistic director of Louis Vuitton menswear and founder of his own streetwear line, Off-White. This high-top is just one example of how his designs define what's next. Off-White "Off-Court" 3.0 sneakers.

## INVEST IN BLACK GOLD

Trends come and go, but the black motorcycle jacket rides on, timeless and iconic. Saint Laurent's version is 100 percent lambskin, which means it's softer, smoother and longer-lasting than standard leather. Saint Laurent motorcycle jacket.



## SEX OBJECTS

### DISCRETION ON DEMAND

Launched just this year, Maude is a mail-order sex-essentials company devoted to presentation, production and personalisation. Its latex condoms are 100 percent natural, the signature lubricant is organic, and its vibrator is soft silicone. All products are delivered in simple, sleek packaging, with monthly subscription plans in the works. Maude kit 7.

### LEARN THE ROPES

The sacred art of bondage has supplied orgasms for centuries, and this suede whip, silk cuffs and pleasure beads set from LELo, one of the most exciting sex-toy brands out there, promises any couple a kinky good time. LELo Dare Me Pleasure Set.





## HIGH NOTES

### UP YOUR CONCENTRATION

As cannabis laws ease globally, companies are developing new high-tech and sophisticated ways to get stoned. The Peak Smart Rig from Puffco is a sleek vaporizer that works like a dab rig but is quicker and easier to use. Puffco Peak Smart Rig.

### DOWNPLAY YOUR VICE

Summerland's handmade ceramic bongs look nothing like the ones on college campuses. This is an elevated, grown-up version of old-school paraphernalia with craftsmanship so slick it can double as a bookcase curio. Summerland Chongo Marble bong.







*"...Before we begin the orgy, I'd just like to cover a couple things about sexual harassment."*



# CJ SPARXX

## About me.

Small town girl, grew up on a farm. Was a tomboy growing up, played soccer and that's where I got my nickname, CJ. Oldest of 4 siblings. Actually worked at Wal Mart for a year to save up for a boob job at the age of 20.

## My hobbies and interests.

Love hot yoga, museums, comedy clubs, travel and food.

## My goals and career ambitions.

To help woman see that they are beautiful no matter their shape or size or age and To become the oldest platmate ever.

## Who inspires me.

My brother.

## My favourite quote.

Having to do with relationships "make sure you pick someone who's demons play well with yours".

## Turn on.

Strength, courage, ambition and patience.

## Turn off.

Entitlement and narcissism

## The perfect date.

A live performance of any sort and dinner.

## My girl crush.

Chrissy Teagen

## My favourite food.

Spaghetti squash with grilled chicken.

## My biggest fear.

That my voice will never make a big enough impact in today's society

## One destination I'd love to visit.

Portugal

# Khloë TERAE

## About me.

Born in Toronto, Canada however currently residing in LA, I consider the world my oasis, as at a young age of 25, I have already been fortunate to have travelled to 48 countries. My modeling achievements compares to one of which who has decades of experience, but this not the case as my breakthrough came in 2012, when I was only 19 and was invited to work with Playboy. Since then my career skyrocketed and I have been featured a number of times in Playboy, MAXIM, Sports Illustrated & countless other magazines along with major media campaigns for world-renowned brands.

## My hobbies and interests.

I love outdoor activities!!! Hiking, biking, swimming, paddle boarding.. getting out in nature and exploring this beautiful planet!

## Who inspires me.

My late grandmother was the biggest inspiration to me!

## My favourite quote.

Live life with no regrets!

## Turn on.

Chivalry!!!

## Turn off.

Biting nails and bad manners.

## The perfect date.

Take me away to an island!

## My girl crush.

Margo Robbie!

## My favourite food:

I love anything truffle!

## My biggest fear.

To be buried alive.

# Maisa KEHL

## About me.

I am a Brazilian Model, Influencer, host, actress, dancer, fitness motivator, and spokesperson. I started my career winning pageants from 1989-2016, studied International Business plus earned an Associate of Arts in English degree, I have graced the international pages of 37 international magazines and over 16 covers. currently live in the USA, available around the world for print, advertising, marketing, promotions, catalog, and much more.

## Something surprising about you.

I still know how to dance Brazilian Samba from when I learned for my pageants as a little girl.

## Shooting for Playboy.

I was extremely excited! I was born in a small town in Brazil, but I always followed and was a fan of the legendary Hugh Hefner; an outspoken supporter of multiculturalism and a maverick in the industry. To be invited to shoot for the International Edition of Playboy Australia alongside my two best international girlfriends (Chloe from Canada and CJ from USA) was an honor and a dream come true. Beauty comes in all shapes and forms and this edition displayed it.

## My inspiration.

My parents, who have always been my biggest cheerleaders and support.

## My modelling career.

To actively promote and remind women that it's okay to love and honor themselves FULLY, allowing women to be more sex-positive and body-positive in every stage of their lives.

## My modelling inspiration.

All the women that came before me and open the space so I can do the work I do today.

Photography by **LUIS GOMEZ - UNIVERSE 137 STUDIOS**  
 MUA **JESSICA TULLAS** Event by **RICHARD CRUIT**





**I'm not embarrassed to say.**

I never wear panties, they annoy me. You can follow me on @cjsparxx on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Thank you for allowing me the pleasure of gracing the pages of your beautiful magazine. CJ Sparxx

**One destination I'd love to visit.**

I'm lucky to have been able to travel to so many countries at such a young age already 48 but I do have a long list of countries I need to see: Japan, Maldives, Argentina, Brazil, Tahiti, Russia... just to name a few!

**I'm not embarrassed to say.**

I love sports! I love attending all games such as hockey, basketball, soccer, football, and even baseball!

You can follow me on Instagram @Khloe

**My hobbies and interests.**

I like yoga and meditation because it's a way for me to alleviate stress, clear my mind, and refocus. Plus, I can do it anywhere. I travel so much that it's invaluable to me to have something that keeps me healthy and feeling good no matter where I am.

**Three things on my bucket list.**

Skydive. Visit more countries. Start a charity foundation.

**Turn-ons**

Integrity, politeness, kindness, drive, and a positive attitude.

**Turn-offs**

Insecurity, laziness, cockiness, bad manners or bad hygiene.

**My perfect date.**

Take me to a beach house. Let's relax to ourselves while we prepare a homecooked meal. Then enjoy the view and a drink or some live music, conversation and laughs!

**My mantra.**

The sky is the limit.

**Follow me here:**

Instagram: @mistakoff  
Facebook: Misty Koff  
Twitter: @mistakoff

























PLAYBOY PROFILE

# DAWN OF A NEW ERA





**Lina Esco** captured the world's attention by asking women to free the nipple in the name of equality. Now she's calling on men to join her crusade to update the US Constitution. Will it work?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ELLEN VON UNWERTH

You might not know much about the Equal Rights Amendment, but you probably know plenty about Free the Nipple. The former was conceived by suffragist Alice Paul almost a century ago, after American women won the right to vote but still found themselves without gender-specific civil

rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The latter is a global phenomenon created by an actress and activist fed up with the double standards applied to nudity and perpetuated by state law and social media policy. The ERA has languished since the last major push toward its ratification in the early 1980s, and Free the Nipple remains one of the most viral memes of the past decade, supported by the likes of Kendall Jenner, Chrissy Teigen and Cara Delevingne. Despite their differences, these two movements converged two years ago when Free the Nipple creator Lina Esco (who also co-wrote, directed and starred in the 2014 movie of the same name) and a small bipartisan team launched the Human Campaign — an organisation with a new take on getting women's full equality written into America's founding document.

"The biggest obstacle we had with Free the Nipple was that it was a very small umbrella; at first glance, people were always misunderstanding it," Esco says, meeting with PLAYBOY at a breezy hotel restaurant in Beverly Hills. "The word *human* was so much more powerful. I believe that people don't want to be divided by race, they don't want to be divided by colour, they don't want to be divided by gender. They want to come together."

Esco has been in the film and TV world for more than a decade, having appeared on shows like *Flaked*, *Kingdom* and *Heroes: Destiny*. These days she's a principal cast member on CBS's *S.W.A.T.*, whose second season premiered in September. She arrives to our interview fresh from the boxing gym, dressed in ripped jeans and a faded Fugazi T-shirt, her chin-length hair framing a strong jawline and a pair of dark, searching eyes. The setting is apt: Esco learned at an early age that when it comes to advocacy, show

business can be as powerful as politics.

But calling out gender inequality by celebrating nudity is one thing; amending the Constitution is another — a fact that's not lost on Esco and her team. Consider again the differences between Free the Nipple and the Human Campaign: from specific to broad, from playful to serious, from gendered (in context, since men's nipples have been free for a while now) to all-inclusive. It's that last part that matters most to Esco. It is, she believes, the movement's leftward drift and its failure to engage men that have crippled the ERA. These are the flaws she aims to fix. All she has to do is build a few bridges — across the gender spectrum and the ever more abysmal political divide.

Most entertainers would be more comfortable making a donation, posting some strident lines on their socials and getting on with their lives. This one wants to unite a country that finds itself in the throes of a civil war.

...

Lina Esco grew up poor in Miami, the child of a mother with dreams of being a painter and a father she describes as an "aspiring architect." The latter gave Esco her first sense of inequality. "My father was completely... how can I describe it? Controlling, macho, type-A toward my mother at all times," she says. "Telling her what to wear, how to act, while he and I would go out and he'd be checking out women and be completely obvious about it."

The family's devout Catholicism posed its own challenges. In confession, Esco would argue with the man sitting on the other side of the lattice, asking why Adam and Eve were depicted with belly buttons and why the Bible referred to God as a "he." Tensions with family and faith came to a head one day when her father invited people to the house and conducted a ritual involving scattered salt and a ring of fire on the floor. Esco, then 13, was placed in the middle. "I'm like, Wait, what? My father just put me in here because he thinks it's going to protect me and bring money to

them? But I went along with it; I was really young." To this day, the memory baffles her.

With her mother's tacit support, Esco ran away from home in her mid-teens. She had already gotten into acid, weed and mushrooms. Soon enough, she was hooked on heroin. She couch-surfed, lived on the streets intermittently and drifted apart from her non-junkie friends. One day, messed up on something at the beach, Esco was approached by a woman who told her she should model. And with that, she found herself flying to Los Angeles, Paris and New York, barely old enough to drive but somehow building a career. She kicked heroin — no rehab or methadone, just five days of hell. She booked some commercials and reconnected with a zest for acting she'd discovered back in school. In 2005 she landed her first credit, appearing alongside Jessica Biel and Chris Evans in a film called

*London* — just a few years after she'd been living on the streets. She was barely 20.

Most of this she relates from a couch in her trailer. It's two weeks after our first interview, and *S.W.A.T.* is shooting at a sun-baked lot in Santa Clarita, California. Esco has just wrapped for the day and is still wearing a tight black top and matching tactical pants. She speaks comfortably, letting her volume rise and fall as she probes the scars of her childhood, with a slight Newsies i inflection you might not expect from a Miami native. She skips the fact that early in her acting career she produced and directed promos for *The Cove*, the 2009 Oscar-winning documentary about the slaughter of dolphins in Japanese waters, and that in addition to founding Free the Nipple, she helped Miley Cyrus launch the Happy Hippie Foundation. (Esco and Cyrus met while making the 2012 movie *LOL*.) As her career has developed, so has her activism.

Asked if she inherited any goodness from her father, she allows a rare pause. "No," she says. "The only good thing I inherited is that without him being the way he was, and without all the bad things happening, I would have never run away from home. I would have never done the things I've done. And I would have





never done a film like *Free the Nipple* or tried to be a part of the gender-equality revolution.”

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Esco launched the Human Campaign in 2016 with the help of two unlikely allies: Johanna Masko, a former campaign operative and White House media director for President Barack Obama, and Katie Packer Beeson, who served as deputy campaign manager for Mitt Romney in his 2012 bid for the presidency. It quickly became part of a diverse and growing movement that includes the ERA Coalition, the Kamala Lopez film *Equal Means Equal* and the advocacy of celebrities including Meryl Streep, Alyssa Milano and Patricia Arquette.

The language of the ERA is simple; its path to ratification is anything but. The first and most important of the amendment’s three sections reads, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” The arguments against it range from the practical — the 14th Amendment promises “equal protection” to all citizens born or naturalised on American soil, though it’s also the first amendment to add specifically male language to the Constitution — to the cultural, as personified by ultraconservative

constitutional lawyer Phyllis Schlafly, who died in 2016. The ERA cleared both houses of Congress in the early 1970s, but thanks in part to Schlafly’s STOP ERA countermovement, it fell three states short of the necessary 38-state quorum at the time of its 1982 deadline. (These days, vocal ERA opponents are remarkably hard to come by outside the occasional op-ed piece; legal complexities aside, seemingly no one wants to be seen standing in the way of women’s rights.) Just this year, Illinois became the 37th state to ratify the amendment, but even after the 38th state signs on, a maze of legal challenges lies in wait.

Its advocates see the ERA as a constitutional high ground from which to close the gender pay gap, bring about greater representation in government and business, and fight sexual assault and harassment. And they see its benefits as universal, as you might expect from a movement whose direct and indirect supporters have ranged from Gloria Steinem and Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Richard Nixon and Antonin Scalia.

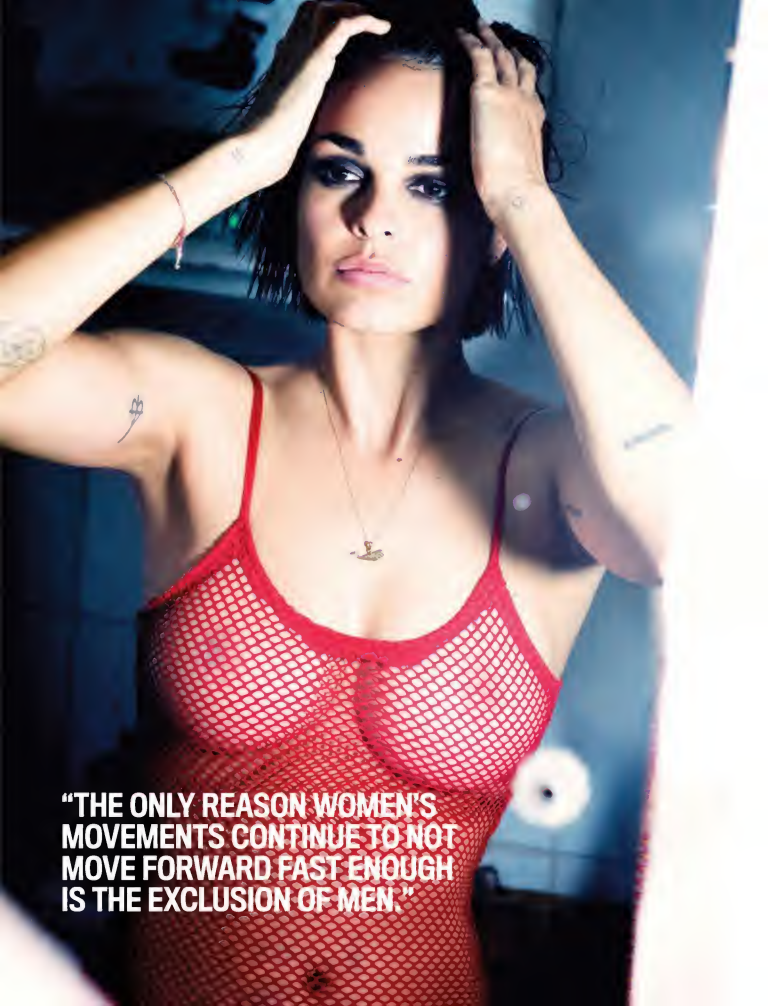
“When you bring the wife or the daughter or the mother into the picture,” Esco says, “it changes everything.”

Esco’s take on the 14th Amendment is that, in ease after ease, it has simply not

delivered equal protection. She cites *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*, a Supreme Court case in which a greeter employed by the big box giant unsuccessfully sued for equal pay and treatment for male and female workers. But even defenders of the 14th see the merits of a newer amendment that specifically protects women.

“My argument would be that 14 plus 19 equals ERA,” says Akhil Amar, a Yale law professor and constitutional scholar, citing the 1920 amendment that granted women the right to vote. Speaking with *PLAYBOY* a week before testifying at the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, Amar argues that there is value in the ERA — even if that value is more declaratory than practical. “I’m for it less because I think it would actually work big changes in legal doctrine but more because I would like to get everyone mobilised around this idea,” he says. “I think it would be good for women, and for women of this generation to do it themselves rather than merely inherit it from their foremothers.”

Why this generation? Three factors suggest themselves. One, Esco, born a year after Mark Zuckerberg, proved via *Free the Nipple* that she has the innate social media savvy



**"THE ONLY REASON WOMEN'S  
MOVEMENTS CONTINUE TO NOT  
MOVE FORWARD FAST ENOUGH  
IS THE EXCLUSION OF MEN."**



common to people her age. Two, the war on terror, the Great Recession and the protests against both underscored her generation's transition into adulthood. Three, with the rise of President Donald Trump — in particular his “locker-room talk” and alleged history of sexual assault—it’s hard to remember a time when activism had so much raw fuel and powerful tools all at once.

“When I was growing up there was no talk of women’s empowerment,” says Esco’s *Free the Nipple* co-star Lola Kirke. “The Spice Girls were Spice Girls, and they were adult women. ‘Girl power’ was the closest we got to it, but that was still couched in some kind of patriarchy. The way we consider gender is being overhauled in a massive way, and I think Lina is an agent of that.”

The time may be right for the Human Campaign, but whether its approach will finally get the ERA passed remains to be seen. No moral cause exists in a vacuum, and Esco’s commitment to inclusivity was tested when she found herself swept up in another movement, thanks to another insecure and volatile man.

...

Last fall, a particular *Free the Nipple* credit — “very special thanks” — prompted a reporter from *The Washington Post* to contact Esco, who became part of a wide-ranging article titled “Violence. Threats. Begging. Harvey Weinstein’s 30-Year Pattern of Abuse in Hollywood.” It ran just days into the cultural cataclysm that birthed the #MeToo movement. Compressed into approximately 300 words, Esco’s Weinstein story runs like this: “Around 2010,” they meet through a mutual friend. Later, Weinstein invites her to dinner, and during that dinner he says, “I think we should see a movie in the theater, like back in the day, and we should kiss.” Esco declines, despite Weinstein’s implying that accepting his advances would make things “easier” for her, and writes it off as a typical power play by a creepy man. While making *Free the Nipple*, she hits him up for help finding a film editor. All true, but while Weinstein’s motives are clear enough in the article, Esco’s are not.

“I didn’t go and search for that story,” she tells *PLAYBOY*. “I didn’t go searching to talk about what happened to me. I believe my story wasn’t strong enough compared to the other women’s. I’d been raped twice before I was 18, so this stuff that happened with me and Harvey was nothing in my eyes. In no way or shape was I trying to be a victim.”

Retracing the story in her trailer, she describes that first encounter as “two film geeks talking about shots in movies.” Months later,



she received an out-of-the-blue text — an invitation to meet Weinstein at a restaurant within the Peninsula, another swanky Beverly Hills hotel. Emerging from a boxing-gym workout, dressed in sweats and sneakers, she thought, Fuck it, I'll go. She knew, of course, that Weinstein was a valuable friend for an emerging Hollywood talent to have. She was unaware of the allegations that would burst into the public record a few years later.

So she joined him at the restaurant. Then, out of nowhere, came Weinstein's proposition. "And he just would not let it go," she says. "He was so aggressive about it." Eventually, Esco got up and left.

A couple of years later, *Free the Nipple* was in the can — but barely. The project had spooked Esco's agents, who dropped her, and many others mistook the film for pornography. Money problems and canceled locations in New York City found Esco in the editing room, thinking, I'm a million dollars deep and I don't have a fucking film. A producer suggested that Esco call on Weinstein. "I was like, Fuck it! That fucking guy insulted me like that, disrespected me? Fuck that. I'm gonna use him now." She texted Weinstein, and within minutes his secretary connected Esco to Matt Landon, one of Weinstein's longtime editors, who stepped in and helped her finish the film. Hence the very special thanks for Weinstein.

"It's not like he asked for it," she says. "I did not forget what he did to me, but I turned it around."

The Post article allows the interpretation that Esco simply ditched her morals the minute they stood in the way of her career. But Esco has a different take, one that's more consistent with the rest of her story. "If *The Washington Post* had never contacted me, I would've never said anything. There was no need. In my eyes, I walked away from that, and I was like, He's just a fucking pig. That's it. I walked away from it."

...

As it happens, Esco tells *PLAYBOY* this story days after sexual-assault allegations emerged against Asia Argento, one of Weinstein's earliest accusers. Although she won't judge Argento's innocence or guilt, Esco has always sensed that "this can happen to men and women." She gives you the sense that a successful movement must be broad enough to account for human error, to welcome radically different ideas on how to reach a common goal, to include people who could be mistaken for the enemy. Hence the human in the Human Campaign. It's an invitation to look past differences, as painful as that may be.

"The only reason women's movements and feminist movements continue to not move forward fast enough is because of the exclusion of men," Esco says. "It's because of



the pointing of fingers. We're wasting our time on things that are not important, and we need to come together."

Instead of marches, Esco and her partners plan to chart inroads through government and academia, red states and blue, facilitating conversations while delving into the political process. "Education, communication, conversations," she says. "When you watch people really listen, no matter what your point of view is, people's guards go down."

When those conversations turn to the perceived redundancies between the 14th Amendment and the ERA, a moving case can be made for constitutional evolution. "We talk about amendments," says Akhil Amar. "I believe these are making amends for some of the sins and lapses of earlier generations. I don't think history is always progress. We went from Obama to Trump — that's not progress. But look at the amendments: Almost every amendment, with the exception of Prohibition, which was quickly repealed, is a genuine making of amends. It's an improvement. They add to liberty and equality. That's a pretty extraordinary arc, and the ERA would beautifully fit."

The Human Campaign is in its early stages. Its success will require a major bipartisan consensus both among the electorate and within the government, where the amendment's lapsed

deadline would need to be challenged. If Esco is daunted, she doesn't show it. She has spent half her life fighting for a kinder, more equitable world.

So why was she surprised when a Harvard University administrator asked her if she had ever thought of running for office? "I'm like, Never going to happen. I've done a lot of crazy shit in my life. I was doing heroin when I was like 17. I dropped out of high school." The administrator replied, "It doesn't matter. Look who's our president now."

Our president makes several appearances during our conversation in Esco's trailer. She keeps CNN on throughout the day, and this particular day is a big one for Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen, who has just claimed that, at his client's instruction, he paid hush money to porn star Stephanie Clifford and *PLAYBOY* Playmate Karen McDougal.

The president's proclivities are, of course, familiar territory to Lina Esco: She freed herself from her father, survived sexual assault and, in her own way, settled the score with Weinstein — all before turning 30. And though anger is never far from the surface when Esco speaks, anger does not define her. Her openness in a clenched and divided age may just give the ERA the final push it so urgently needs. ■







# Olga LOERA

*Photography by* **DANYA MORRISON** *MUA* **STEPHANIE KILMER**  
*Fashion Designer* **APRIL BLACK** *Fashion Style* **ARMANDO HERNANDEZ**



**Describe yourself in three words?**  
Passionate, Persistent and a Fighter.

**Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?**

I have the privilege and the most wonderful experience to express myself, corporally and artistically through this amazing platform.

**What was it like starting out as a model?**

You will find that preparing yourself is the best thing you can do in order to achieve the goal you set out to. Is like anything in life in any career. if you apply for a position in an art gallery, you would not go to your interview with bad hair. Looking the part is very important, but also having the right attitude will go a long way to ensure you get noticed by the right people.

**What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?**

My biggest challenge in life is to be the best I can and take each day as a lesson to get there. That's applies not only to my personal but also to my professional life, for one cannot plan away to overcome the challenges life imposes on us, we just have to face them and overcome them the best way possible, not only having in mind our own expectations, but the expectations others have on us.

**Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?**

A perfect day for me is, wake up in the morning and go for my daily run and workout, I try to visualize what my perfect day would look like, and play this beautiful scene inside my head over and over again. It's really powerful stuff, and I'm getting more clear of what I want and desire the most each time I do it, I really love spending and being around my fiancé, my family and enjoy every single minute with them, like if were the last minute of my life.

**Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?**

I considerate by myself as a country girl, I grew up around a big farm with my Grandparents living and enjoying the simple things of the nature, but I love the big concrete jungles, specially Sidney and NYC.

**If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?**

It's hard to decide there are many special places in my heart, but one the top of my list of favourite cities is Melbourne, venture into Melbourne's hidden spaces and iconic laneways and find and electric nightlife, and obviously the most iconic city, Bellenong Point where you kind find the most majestic Performing Art Center the Opera House.

**Do you have a secret talent?**

One of my secret talent is, that I am really good with fashion styling and design, and I really love the creativity and I am very passionate about what I do.

**Guilt pleasure?**

One of my guilty pleasure in life is the food and tequila, coffee in the morning and a secret, I can eat sweet potato all day long everyday, and obviously Mexican food.

**Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?**

Well one of my favourite Mexican singers and composer are "El Sol de Mexico" Luis Miguel and obviously Joan Sebastian "El Rey del Jarapeo" they have absolutely really passionate good songs and they can get inside of your heart, specially if you are taking a good shot of tequila, like a good Mexican.











**What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?**

LOVE: To me love means finding someone the brings out the best version of yourself and challenge you to be better. LOVE means to make knowing that no matter what you have someone to count on. It's unconditional and make you feel good on the inside.

**Any last words you would like to share with the readers?**

Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart, to my family and to every single one of my fans, for all your unconditional love and support, I'm working in a few projects for you guys, and specially I'm working in my NEW BOOK, so many projects on their way, so stay tuned. Much Love Olga Loera.





# The FOURTH ARMADA

FICTION BY MAXIM LOSKUTOFF

*Comes was ordered into the city at night to find a dog. Fishermen's shacks lined the beach, black against the lighter dark of the sky. In the distance, atop a rise, the long low walls of the Zamorin's palace formed the horizon, punctuated by the leering heads of heathen gods. Comes rowed slowly, fear and dread in his heart. He concentrated on silencing the blades of the oars as they dipped into the water. He'd heard, from the men who survived the first Armada, of the four great halls inside the palace, one each for Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jews, and the tall spikes where the Muslim traders were impaled for selling a cow.*

He did not wish to think about this, nor the dog, nor the high priest being held prisoner on Admiral da Gama's ship. He longed for the shore to transform into the beach of his home outside Porto, and he to the boy he'd been there not so long ago, swimming in that familiar sea.

But it did not, and nor did he. A single wavering lantern burned faintly to the north. Some wayward fisherman sneaking home through the night with his catch. Comes wished him to hurry; if they met in the street he'd have to kill him. The knife at his belt was heavy; its long curved blade rested against his hip and the center thwart. He'd never killed a man, but he'd watched them die — many now,

in these past eight months of voyage — in many ways. They did not go easily. Each had clung to life far past the suffering Comes thought he could bear.

The half-moon was shrouded by clouds, seeming to lie in the sky like a jewel in a lover's sheets. Its paleness trembled. Before departing, full of the arrogance — and hope — of youth, Comes had thought he'd find a woman on this journey, more exotic and beautiful than any in Portugal. Instead the men buggered each other on the gun deck and raped frightened whores in port. The light shone more brightly off the water than it did above. In this country, where everything was upside down, the men dressed as women and cows

were worshipped as gods. Comes tried to pray to his god, but He felt too distant, as if His eyes were hidden by the curve of the earth. His dominion halved. The peril of this blasphemy wrapped itself around Comes's heart. Da Gama had warned they would be travelling into hell, but Comes had begun to wonder if it was hell they brought with them.

Near the shore, fishing nets came into view, hanging like massive spiderwebs from the porches of the shacks, their glass weights luminous eggs. Comes's fear began to turn to panic. Who knew what roamed these streets? What venomous and outsize creatures, serpents of old or scorpions as big as pigs. Once

ILLUSTRATION BY JAKE FOREMAN





in a shop near his home, he'd seen a picture of an elephant looming above its trainer, its massive foot raised as if to crush him. ... He forced the panic down his throat, thinking of a cave where he'd often hidden as a boy, listening to the waves crash outside while the other children played. He clutched the oars and guided the skiff to the south, quickening his stroke now that he was in view. It would be worse to be seen here than on land. He imagined a battalion being formed to greet him on the beach, spears and torches raised. He imagined being stripped and dragged through the streets, set down naked on the spike. But he could not return to the *Esmeralda* without a dog, or da Gama would dispatch him in a way worse still.

Sand scraped the bottom of the prow. Comes hunched forward and secured the oars in the rowlocks. The boat wobbled as he stepped out; warm seawater swamped his boots. Palm trees leaned over the sand. The air seemed thick with disease. He cursed softly and dragged the bow above the tide line, grimacing at the grating sound it made. *Take heart*, he told himself.

it whispered.

Comes unsheathed his knife and held the blade against his thigh. He kept his head low, hoping his dark hair would allay any suspicion from a distance, though once they saw his foreign garb.... He cursed again. Why had he not been given a disguise, at least? He was fodder to da Gama, they all were, to be chewed up and spat aside in pursuit of his destiny. The Admiral of the Seas of Arabia, Persia, India and all the Orient. Chosen son of Portugal, and God.

All Comes wanted was to go home. The stalls of the fishmongers were shuttered, their scales and salt blocks and ice chests secured within, where the mongers themselves lay sleeping. Comes searched the shadows for dogs. He followed his nose, trying to block out the sharp smell of spices for the familiar ripeness of fish. The tailings and innards must be discarded somewhere. The poorest children of Porto often fought strays for their daily meals. Comes rounded a corner beneath a tree laden with huge, spiky fruit. A red dog lay

It would have to be a stray, one that no one would miss, with no territory to defend, that he could befriend somehow.

Keeping to the shadows, he carried on up the street toward the palace. The heads along the wall seemed to stare down at him, and he was seized by a brief, strange impression: What if he'd been born here in Calicut instead of Porto? An Indian, a fisherman like his own father. Would his life have been so different? Would these heathen gods have taken him in, or would they too have flung him loose on the winds of his pride, to some foreign land where he was set upon a terrible task?

Unsettled by these questions, Comes followed his nose. The fish scent intensified. At home, and in every other harbour he'd visited, the smell was strongest on the beach — where the fish were gutted and kept and sold — but here it grew as he walked inland. The shacks around him changed as well, lengthening into warehouses which smelled so strongly his eyes began to water. How could people live in such a stench? All manner of stalls fronted them, and

# “YOU ARE A SPY. AND I WILL TEACH YOU YOUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD.”

Nothing had moved. No noise nor commotion disturbed the shacks. Only bats swooping silently through patches of moonlight, and a single gray thread of smoke rising from a distant temple. He tied off to the nearest trunk. Two coconuts were snuggled like testicles high beneath the fronds. He adjusted his own under his tunic — perhaps they still held some luck — and crept up the beach to the end of the mud-packed road.

When he met the hard surface, he swayed and nearly fell. A month had passed since he'd stood on solid land. In Sofala, where all hands had been needed to load the plundered tribute aboard, the dismembered bodies of the Kilwa sultan's retinue still dangling from the masts, their eyeless and noseless faces imploring. Comes stood still and waited for the dizziness to pass. Why had da Gama sent him on this mission, of all the 720 remaining men? Did he see something in him, some potential? Was it a test? Or was there some insolence on his face that he wanted to break? Mosquitoes whined around Comes's neck. The dense tropical heat was like a tongue on his cheek. *You will die here*,

sleeping on the porch of a larger shack. It was curled into a ball, its tail tucked beneath its chin, breathing evenly, its smooth coat shining like an ember. Comes gripped the knife. He wasn't sure what to do. Da Gama's order had been three words: “Find a dog.” He hadn't said whether it should be red or black, young or old, alive or dead. Though Comes suspected it didn't matter. He remembered the priest reeling on the deck, bloodied but defiant, while his men were executed one by one.

A thatched palm roof overhung the shack's woven reed walls, and a child's doll lay among herbs in the small garden. Comes thought of the family inside, the mother and father and children, living in the particular squalor of this heathen city. He thought of how to lure the dog to him and how to get it back on the small boat. If only he'd brought a piece of fish to use as chum. He didn't want to kill it. He stepped forward, then froze. Surely this dog, attached as it was to a home, would bark wildly if he stepped too near, waking the entire street and killing him as if it had plunged a knife into his chest. He clenched his fist. No, he backed away.

he wondered what the promenade looked like during the day. The bustle of men and women in brightly colored robes like those he'd seen on the priest. Dyes more vivid than any in the world, worth dying for.

Ahead, the land dropped away and a bridge crossed a canal. The slow-moving water stank horribly of fish and feces, as if the entire population ate and shat there together in unison, before tossing away the remains of their catch. Comes realised that a network of these canals connected the city, to be shat and bathed in at will. The animals. With a brief flash of pride, he remembered the aqueducts and plumbing of Porto, a separate city beneath the city, its own intestine, silently bearing the waste away. No wonder the Zamorin's army had no artillery. No wonder da Gama would crush them beneath his heel with only 15 ships.

Comes leaned over the bridge's rail and looked down at the black banks. His eyes adjusted to the darkness and he saw a lighter shape moving along the water's edge. Its head was down as it sniffled through the refuse. The hair along its spine was ragged and patchy and





the tip of one ear had been bitten off. Its distended stomach hung nearly to the ground, slapping from side to side, a horrid excess of skin. A stray no one would miss. It might even be an act of mercy. Without letting himself hesitate or think further, Comes crept off the bridge onto the steep embankment.

Almost immediately, he slipped and fell backward, landing hard on his ass. The dog raised its head and watched as Comes slid feetfirst down to the fetid water, soaking himself in mud and shit. He thrashed upright, sopping the slime from his cuffs, nausea rising in his stomach. He cursed and then apologized to God and then cursed again. The dog, only 10 yards away, blinked and raised one ear. "It's okay," Comes whispered softly. "Come, boy, come here." The dog's ears flattened, and it turned and began to trot along the bank, swaybacked on an injured leg.

"No, no," Comes shook himself and plunged after it, but it sped up, tucking its tail between its legs and loping with surprising speed toward the beach.

"I won't hurt you." His lies were ignored. He felt around for a piece of fish or meat to offer, but encountered only things too slimy and horrible to hold. The dog followed the canal outward from the town. Comes was less afraid of being heard here. He'd be taken for another scavenger down in the muck, or a madman; surely there were plenty of those in the filthy city. He fingered the length of rope around his waist; he planned to use it to secure the dog's muzzle and claws—all the better if he could drive it out to the beach and catch it there. He didn't want to get mauled in the tiny boat. The canal walls were supported by stone abutments, ancient and simple architecture. The water moved slow and murky beside him.

It was the deepest part of the night, two hours before dawn. Comes tasted metallic adrenaline, spurring him onward. Once as a small boy, he'd watched a mendicant cross hot coals, and noticed how the man never looked down. He'd thought at the time that this was the key—pain must only be something you could see—but now it had become his life: a race to not look down. His feet slapped the shallow water. If he had children someday, he would forbid them from ever leaving his house. His tailbone ached where he'd landed. The dog remained far ahead, but it slowed as they neared the beach.

The canal widened and in the distance Comes saw da Gama's armada. The 15 towering ships like demons of the ocean's depths, forming a wall across the mouth of the bay. It felt like no part of him. Like no sign of home. The masts and gunwales loomed blackly as if they'd risen from the water in the night. Comes wondered if the Indian fishermen looked to their dark silence and questioned their lives. Did they seek to repent, fall to their knees and accept the one true God? Or did they merely try to carry on in the

face of another incomprehensible machination, threatening to crush them beneath its wheel? Da Gama wanted everything, an unfettered monopoly on the spice trade, and he would have it, even if it meant burning the city to the ground. Comes shook his head. What was the use of such thoughts? He was only a deckhand. *Get the dog, get back to the ship.*

A delta of sorts spilled across the sand. At high tide it would be swallowed by the waves, but now it stretched before him in a glimmering wash. The dog stopped at its edge and looked back. Comes stopped as well. His only hope was to trick it and awaken the trust all dogs have in men, even after years of abuse. He turned away and watched the creature out of the corner of his eye. It stared back, head down, miserable in the open. He reached into his pocket and withdrew an invisible morsel. He sniffed it. He dropped it on the ground and went down on all fours, keeping himself turned from the dog. He raised his rear and lowered his head, snuffing his nose just above the sand and clacking his teeth together, pretending to chew. He picked up fish bones and snapped them with his fingers.

The dog continued to stare at him, perhaps remembering some long-ago kindness. He was blocking its passage back to the safety of the canal. It looked out to the sea, it looked down, and then it took a tentative step toward him. Comes kept on with the fish bones, making happy crunching noises. The dog approached. Carefully and slowly, hardly daring to breathe, Comes loosened the rope from around his waist. He remained this way until the dog was only a few feet away. It stopped there, raised its nose and sniffed the air with a desperate hope. The look in its eyes was nearly enough to make Comes give up his plan. Take the dog in as a pet, flee into the jungle, build a shack, find a woman and begin again, for he too longed for a better world.

Instead he lunged, catching the dog around the shoulders and driving it to the sand. It yelped and crumpled beneath him, lashing its head from side to side. It clawed and bit his arms, but age quickly betrayed it—he felt the tired frailty beneath its skin—and it gave up, hardly struggling as Comes tied the rope around its snout and legs. When he'd finished, it stared up at him with the same imploring look as before, as if its fate were not yet sealed. "I'm sorry," Comes whispered, touching its ears before hefting it to his chest and carrying it to the boat. "I don't have any food. I'm sorry."

...

The high priest was brought to the deck at dawn. His robes were bloodstained and his cheeks were battered. His skin was lighter than the other Indians Comes had seen, and his entire body seemed devoid of hair, from the top of his skull to the soles of his bare feet. Deep purple bruises stood out beneath his shackles. His hazel eyes

were glossy and dazed. All the defiance had left him after a night in a cell below deck, with the hands and feet of his retinue, including his son, in a sack before him. Yet still he walked gracefully, with small, careful steps, as if in his sleep.

Admiral da Gama emerged from the cabin atop the stern to greet him. Tall and burheaded, with a long, wide beard over the goldrimmed red cloaks of royalty. He'd taken on the aspect of a king as soon as they'd set sail from Lisbon, and his ambition seemed to stretch around him, a huge, shadowy specter reaching for all those who stood in his way. He looked at Comes, still stinking and dripping in his soiled clothes. His gray beard was matched by the grayness of his eyes. Calm, almost kindly, as he descended the steps. He could have been a grandfather or a priest himself. A heavy gold crucifix swayed in the folds of his tunic. Nothing betrayed his cruelty save for the steady depth of his breath, as if the sight of the beaten man and frightened dog invigorated him, a tonic against the morning chill. The first mate Sergini stood behind the dog, with the rope Comes had used to secure it looped through his fist. The officers Berrio and Lopes flanked the priest. Comes watched, shivering, along with the rest of the crew. The dog also trembled, looking back at him as if to a friend.

Dawn sunlight shot gold shafts through the mouth of the bay, too bright to look upon. Sea birds wheeled between them, but no fishing boats passed through the blockade. Comes wondered where their fresh catches had come from. They must be sneaking out at night, like the man he'd seen returning home in the distance. He was duty-bound to inform the admiral, but he kept his mouth locked shut.

Sailors scurried across the decks of the other ships, refixing the riggings, checking guns and anchors, while on the *Esmeralda* everyone was still and silent, waiting. A tentacle could have breached the sea and slammed down on the deck and they would not have moved unless told to, so great was their fear of da Gama. Survival had become their only goal, not riches nor glory, survival through obedience. Only to see their homes again. Comes forced himself to stand erect, exhausted as he was from his sleepless night, and longed to go to his bunk, strip and dry his clothes.

"You are a spy," da Gama said to the priest.

"Lower than this stray dog. And I will teach you your place in the world." They had been negotiating for three weeks, had parried across foodland tables, and now, finally, as da Gama had always planned, the negotiations had failed.

Nothing flickered in the priest's glassy eyes. He had retreated deep within himself, and Comes hoped that was where he would remain. Berrio kicked out his knees—"The admiral is speaking to you!"—and he slumped forward, all the way to his stomach. Lopes had to yank him upright and hold him limply, like a marionette.



"Take his lips and his ears," da Gama said. "He has no more use for them. They sow only falsehoods." He turned to his men, speaking in the same even tone with which he ordered his nightly meal. "We will bring light to this dark country, as our forefathers did to Jerusalem. With the sword."

Berrio drew a small thin knife from his belt. Its blade was only two inches long and stropped to a razor's edge. Comes and all the men knew of this knife. They watched him sharpen it, humming hymns to himself as he kissed the blade back and forth across the rough stone. Back and forth, back and forth, until Comes wondered how there was any blade left. It was a knife he used for close work, and there had been much close work of late. Lopes raised the priest's head and held it firmly between his large hands. He grinned. Berrio stepped forward. The priest's eyes flashed into recognition as the blade flicked nearer. They joggled about, and he began to speak wildly, his words rising, begging for his life perhaps, but the crew of the Esmeralda would never

prisoner slumped back against Lopes's knees, weeping, the tears running along with blood down his smooth cheeks. Lopes released him and patted the top of his head, now a perfect bald oval with a running, red beard. He grinned around at his fellow sailors, as if they should share in this joke. Comes felt sick. He had to keep himself from raising his hands protectively over his own ears, as if Berrio might continue with his knife through the crew. He imagined the ears themselves to be mufflers, and a mad roaring to now be overwhelming the priest, as all the noises of creation rising in.

The dog was fed the ears, chewing them while anxiously looking around, and then da Gama nodded to Sergini. For this, Comes could not look away. He had found the dog, he had brought it here. He had left his home, sailed around the horn of Africa and crossed the unmapped sea for this, and this was what would prevent him from ever finding his way back. Sergini's knife was long and curved like his own, less sharp than Berrio's. The dog made a horrible sound when it cut into its ear.

It would have been a comical sight on stage, this regal man in fine robes with a dog's ears in place of his own, but here in morning sun with the sweat and tears and blood on his face, it was like spikes nailing Comes's feet to the deck. He glanced around at his shipmates. Surely if this was not hell, they would find themselves there soon enough.

The admiral cleared a path through the crew and led the priest to the ladder above the small boat in which Comes had recently returned. Lopes unshackled the priest's wrists and ankles. He winked at his forced red smile and tied the sack of his men's hands and feet around his neck, a pendant to match his bloody visage. Then he backed away, leaving only da Gama with the priest at the rail.

The admiral held his chin high and looked across the bay to the city, as if he could already see it in ruins. He breathed in deeply the morning air. He closed his eyes. Then he leaned close to the priest's cheek. Using a white-gloved hand, he lifted the grey, bitten ear to whisper beneath it, and the

# IF THIS WAS NOT HELL, THEY WOULD FIND THEMSELVES THERE SOON.

know, for the remains of his interpreter drifted beneath the waves. Berrio touched the knife gently to the priest's lips, as if to shush him, and Comes turned away as the blade made its first red line beneath his nose. He heard a strangled moan, and when he turned back, he was greeted by teeth. Long and white, ringed by dripping red gums and leering forth with a crazed rage completely at odds with the terror in the priest's eyes.

The dog whined. The only other sound was the new harshness of the priest's breath. Berrio held up the lips with his thumb and forefinger, a ragged loop of flesh, still in one piece. He offered them to da Gama, but the admiral jerked his head at the dog. Berrio shrugged and dropped the lips before it on the deck. Sergini loosened the leash. The dog looked up, unsure if it would be kicked or beaten for accepting this treat. It looked to Comes, then quickly, gratefully, it lowered its head and snapped up the bloody morsel and gulped it down.

The priest's ears required only a single, hard, sawing stroke each. Berrio looked almost disappointed when he had finished, and the

It wrenched and snapped and tried to buck away. But Sergini pinned it with his knee and the ear was taken, and then the second, and then Sergini lifted the dog up by the rope and it looked to Comes wildly one last time, before being pitched, yowling, over the rail into the sea.

Comes heard the splash, and then no more.

Berrio drew forth a sewing needle and thread from the pouch at his belt. Sergini handed him the dog's ears, and Comes realised what they had been tasked to do. Berrio knelt before the priest and with a practiced deftness, as if his face were a torn shirt, began to sew the ears above the wound where his own had been. Da Gama watched calmly, paternally, though his eyes had begun to glow, as if heated by the culmination of his edict. His power at sea was boundless, and Comes wondered if he too felt himself hidden from God on this far side of the earth.

When the operation was completed, the priest was forced to his feet. The ragged gray ears hung to his neck. The bitten-off tip of the left revealed the tan skin above his collarbone.

priest flinched, as if in such a short time it had become his own.

"You will go home now, to your false king," da Gama said. "You and what remains of your heathen men. And you will tell him one thing: This is God's country now."

...

Comes watched the small boat cross the empty bay. He felt something inside himself slip away. He failed after it. He cannot see you here, he told himself. But it was a lie.

There was no sign of the dog now. It had sunk to the lightless depths, where fish and crabs would eat what it remained. Perhaps wondering at its earless head, much like their own. Comes gripped the damp sides of his breeches to keep his hands from shaking. He tried to pray.

The boat's prow zigzagged as the priest rowed jerkily, his head bowed, blood dripping from the dog's ears to his shoulders. Sunlight all around him. Returning with his new face to a kingdom that would soon be plundered and a temple that would soon be burned.

But at least he was going home. ■



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A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman with dark hair and tattoos, lying down with her head tilted back and eyes closed. She has a large, colorful tattoo on her upper arm and another on her shoulder. Her hands are clasped behind her head. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

# SAJE COX

Photography by **KEVIN WEINERT**

Instagram **@SAJECOXFITNESS & @KEVWPHOTO**







Saje Cox is a personal trainer who began modelling professionally less than one year ago. Her goal is to empower women to love themselves while appreciating other women instead of viewing them as competition. She enjoys traveling to model (and bringing her husband along for the adventures) and snuggling with her 7 rescue dogs.

**Describe yourself in three words**

Free-spirited, powerful, motivated

**Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?**

YES! Playboy has been a long-time dream of mine.

**What was it like starting out as a model?**

Hard! Everyone is a model nowadays and if you want to make it you have to be willing to work hard & invest a lot of time (and money).

**What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?**

The biggest challenge for me is distance. I currently live in Alabama (and don't shoot here) so I travel to LA often to work with some of the best photographers in the industry.

**Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?**

Is there anything better than laying on the beach? I think not.

**Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?**

I am definitely a city person. I love having

something to do at all hours and being able to walk around.

**If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?**

Los Angeles... working on making that happen!

**Do you have a secret talent?**

I don't know if I'd call it a secret, but if you glance at my instagram & don't know me well, you'd probably not know I'm a pretty successful entrepreneur. I'm great at finding unique ways to make money & start businesses.

**A guilty pleasure?**

I love dessert before my entree. You only live once.

**Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?**

"Panama" by Quinn XCII... it reminds me of my Meme. instant waterworks.

**What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?**

"Fearlessly" which means with a lack of fear. I love the word because I love when people aren't afraid to do something.

**Any last words you would like to share with the readers?**

Do what makes you happy & help as many people as you can along the way, but don't ever let someone else's opinion hold you back.













# FOUR IS MORE

*Many cars under one roof. X4 is the all-rounder*

BY JOHN PAIGE

BMW's X-family has grown year on year. Besides matching an SUV across the same broad range as their hatchbacks and sedans (that's now numbers 1 through to 7) BMW Xs sell much faster. The X4 is placed somewhere in the middle of this, and with the coupe roofline it's not an easy car to typecast. We joined BMW on a recent launch event to South Africa to gain a better understanding.

BMW refers to the X4 as a Sports Activity Coupe which after a few kilometres proved an apt description. While it has undertones of lifestyle, at its heart this remains a sporty drive with a visually dynamic side profile. BMW has tinkered with the size making it a little longer and wider. The front kidney grilles flare out and the rear window dips down more steeply than before. Add in 'three

dimensional shaping' around the lights plus a number of other subtle creases and the X4 delivers on its many expectations.

Besides the larger interior (and boot), the X4 manages its space a little differently compared to its siblings. The driving position is a bit lower and tucked closer to the road without compromising the view ahead while the controls are aimed a few degrees towards



the driver because of the X4's sportier designation.

Some options worth checking out would be the 3D parking cameras with panorama view (including the function of viewing your car and its location from your phone), head-up display, wireless charging and active cruise control. You can really get carried away however; take the BMW Connected+ as case in point which even allows cloud-based services where you can edit emails and access other personal data on the move. And turning up the volume or answering a call using natural hand gestures in mid-air is intuitive and fun.

If all this seems a little too much to take in, BMW's kept the choice of engines down to three. They're quite simple; the M40i is the fastest petrol on sale and the 20d still has enough power, costs a bit less and will cover about double the distance without refuelling. The more powerful diesel in the range (M40d) melds these two qualities together – perhaps the pick of the bunch? All of them come with all-wheel drive as standard, so as most parts of South Africa receive their rainfall the X4 is always safe and secure on the road.

The X4 does attempt to juggle a considerable number of roles without compromise and in the grand scheme of things it succeeds. This is a company that has its X formula down pat while the extra space and brilliant engines is further refinement for a car that excels everywhere.



# KONA IS COOL

*Latest addition plays by a new set of rules*

You needn't go for the Acid Yellow paint for Hyundai's chic Kona because even in one of the other subtle hues on offer, the new small crossover's cosmopolitan curves will surely get you noticed. This is a car that looks and drives with the right amount of energy and flair, interacts with whatever smartphone allegiance you've chosen, survives the occasional collision with a pothole, sips fuel economically and offers a choice of two

engines and two gearboxes.

And while Hyundais are usually all serious, the Kona embraces the company's lighter side. Fun is a big part of the Kona and while the 1.0-litre turbo was our preferred choice, the other engine choice is the only one with the automatic gearbox. The catch 22 is a shame, likewise the cramped rear space squashed into those city slick proportions, but because the boot is

big two adults and some luggage is handled with aplomb. There isn't an interminable number of options to affect the base price so both are well equipped and if you're one of the many migrating out of hatchbacks for an alternative that rides a little higher, then Hyundai has you well taken care of.

Cheaper options do exist in this saturated market so the Kona will need to use every one of its tricks, Acid Yellow paint included.





# A CLASS OF ITS OWN

*Merc's latest hatch wants to have a talk*



Behind the smallest Merc lies big tech. Yes the junior member of the Mercedes family has broken rank with some of the company's dazzling features making their debut here, thereby raising our expectations of what your money can buy these days.

In fact the new car is hardly recognisable from those overweight forebears, inside and out. The body is chiselled yet sleek while the overall floorspace has grown, including a much-needed upsizing of the boot volume. All



models boast the two digital screens stretched across the dash's horizon with media, settings, driving info and a myriad menus fluidly dovetailing information either via the centre controller or the touchpads positioned right where your thumbs relax on the steering wheel.

It's a deeply impressive chunk of digital interaction taken a step further with Merc's artificial intelligence. With the couplet 'Hey Mercedes' before a list of pre-programmed commands, the A-Class is the first car to



interpret voice commands with natural dialogue. Yes buttons are just as quick but nowhere near as surreal as asking it to put the heated seats on, de-mist the windscreen or open the panoramic roof, all with only your voice.

With a smoother ride, upmarket materials plus this nascent element of conversation between car and driver, Mercedes has done a brilliant job of packaging the all-new A-Class.



HERITAGE

# SAVING THE SIGN

BY CAT AUER

*Hugh Hefner — the man responsible for countless fantasies — worked to preserve America's symbol of dreams*







**Left:** Bunnies surround John Roche at the August 1978 "Bon Voyage Hollywood Sign" event. **Top:** Chevy Chase performs at the November 1978 gala. **Above:** A banner supporting the "save the sign" cause drapes the D.

At all hours of the day, every day, nearly three dozen security cameras cover Los Angeles's most well-known star, a celebrity that has managed — with significant help from a special friend — the feat of growing old in Tinseltown, turning 95 this year. The VIP is none other than the famed Hollywood sign, and PLAYBOY founder Hugh Hefner the benefactor who helped save it not once but twice.

Instantly recognisable as the geographic marker denoting the world's entertainment capital, as well as a symbol of hopes and dreams, the sign's origin story is relatively unglamorous. In 1923 real estate developer Harry Chandler wanted to lure buyers to the steep, scrub-covered plots north of downtown. His associate John Roche sketched what would be a hillside ad — 13 enormous block letters spelling out the planned neighbourhood's name: Hollywoodland. Built for \$21,000 (the equivalent of more than \$300,000 today) in the days when

television was still in its infancy, the wood-and-steel billboard was meant to come down after 18 months. Yet through the Great Depression and World War II, the letters remained. By 1949 the Hollywoodland subdivision had flopped, television had become part of American life, and the sign was still standing — albeit with a crumbling H and other obvious signs of decay.

"That's when the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the city of Los Angeles got together, gave the sign a makeover and turned it into the leading lady of the film industry," says Chris Baumgart, longtime chair of the nonprofit Hollywood Sign Trust, which is tasked with the sign's maintenance. The 1949 refurb repaired the H and removed the last four letters entirely; it was in this incarnation that it received landmark status from the L.A. Cultural Heritage Board in 1973. Yet the renovation wasn't enough; the sheet metal construction couldn't withstand the elements. By 1978 it was clear the sign needed major help. Most of the letters, pocked with rust and weakened by termite-infested support beams, had been damaged beyond repair by a violent winter windstorm.

Hefner, at that point a relative newcomer to Los Angeles but a lifelong fan of movies and the glamour the sign had come to represent, offered to lend a hand. His \$150-a-plate Playboy

Mansion party, complete with a mini replica of the sign in the Mansion yard, raised \$45,000 and attracted celebrities such as Rita Hayworth, Bob Newhart and Andy Williams. Shortly before the gathering, singer Alice Cooper had dedicated \$27,700 to the cause, an amount Williams and others matched. Stoked by the efforts of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, the post-party total raised to "save the sign" reached \$250,000.

Demolition took place in August 1978 — but not before a "bon voyage" event for the sign was held, complete with speeches from Hef and others. For three months the world was signless as the landmark was rebuilt on the same Cahenga Peak location where it originally stood, with heli copters ferrying 15-foot, 14,000-pound steel I-beams up the hillside to create supports for each 45-foot-tall letter. "The sign you see today was built to last," says Baumgart. Its restoration was celebrated at a November 1978 gala at the Griffith Observatory, with Chevy Chase delivering entertainment and many other stars in attendance. But the sign wasn't quite out of danger.

\*\*\*

Imagine the shining white letters of the Hollywood sign but with luxury estates crowding the land above and behind the H. Such a vision was close to becoming reality: In 2010 developers were exploring the possibility of building mansions there. But, they said, for \$12.5 million by April 30, a nonprofit conservation organisation could purchase the 138 acres of land and keep the "view shed" clear. Major grants made up the bulk of the funds, but the sum was falling short just weeks before the deadline. When Hefner found out, he quickly agreed to cover the difference. As he told *People* magazine, "It would have been a real shame after having restored it if it wound up sold."

"It took the sign's number one fan to come forward again and carry the fund-raising effort across the finish line with his closing gift of nearly \$1 million," says Baumgart, who travelled to the Mansion to pick up Hef's check.

Civic gratitude for Hefner's dedication to the landmark was plentiful: Institutions including the Los Angeles City Historical Society, the Trust for Public Land and the California Legislature honored him. Perhaps the certificate of recognition awarded to him in December 2010 by the city of Los Angeles for his help keeping the hillside free of development said it best: "Every time you look at the Hollywood Hills," the award read, "you will know that you made a permanent, beautiful, living contribution to the people of the City of Los Angeles." ■



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